

**FOLK-SONGS OF THE MAIKAL HILLS**

*also by Verrier Elwin*

GENERAL

*Leaves from the Jungle* (MURRAY)  
*The Aboriginals* (O.U.P.)

NOVELS

*Phulmat of the Hills* (MURRAY)  
*A Cloud that's Dragonish* (MURRAY)

MONOGRAPHS

*The Baiga* (MURRAY)  
*The Agaria* (O.U.P.)  
*Maria Murder and Suicide* (O.U.P.)  
*Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* (O.U.P.)  
*The Muria and their Ghotul* (O.U.P.) *In the pre*

WITH SHAMRAO HIVALE

*Songs of the Forest* (ALLEN & UNWIN)

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*TO*  
W. G. ARCHER



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## INTRODUCTION

THIS second volume of *Specimens of the Oral Literature of Mahakoshal* contains a selection of the folk-songs of the aboriginal population of the Maikal Hills. These lovely mountains at the extreme eastern end of the Satpura Range, traditionally the home of some of the most famous Hindu Rishis, run from Amarkantak, source of the sacred Narbada river, through south-east Mandla into the Saletékri forests of Balaghat. Still wild, remote and lonely, the hills are inhabited by a largely aboriginal population, Baiga and Gond, Agaria and Dhoba, Pardhan and Bharia. We have confined ourselves for the present to the aboriginal poetry of the area, for this forms a clearly defined block of literature still little influenced from outside, still preserving much of its freshness and beauty.

It is possible to speak of this poetry as a whole. In the Maikal Hills all the different tribes mix together and share each other's recreations. The remotest Baiga villages do indeed have their own special movements in their dances and their own emphasis in their songs. The Agaria have their own technical songs about their craft. The Baiga still wistfully sing, as the Gond do not, about their traditional axe-cultivation. The Pardhan have their own long narrative poems of almost epic character which are not shared by the other tribes. But the bulk of the song is common to all and the variations arise only as one moves from place to place. The songs printed here can all, with a few exceptions noted in the text, be called Gond songs; but they could equally well be called Pardhan. We have included a few Baiga songs which are known also to the Gond. Probably the simplest way of reference would be to call them 'Gond songs' unless we have indicated otherwise.

It is generally said that anyone born in the Maikal Hills will never be content to die elsewhere, that those who have once slipped in the mud of Mandla will want to live there always. The beauty of the countryside, the charm of the climate, the friendliness of the people is reflected in the songs. Their poetry is often very beautiful both in form and content, in image and symbol. It is impossible to reproduce in a foreign tongue the often delicate artistry of the originals. But some attempt must

be made to do so before this remarkable oral literature passes from the world in face of the spread of education and the decay of the tribes.

Sometimes, of course, to foreign ears the songs appear unpoetic enough. There are many songs about the prices of things, many work tediously through the whole Table of Affinity. References to betel, bidi, turmeric, sendur, to dhoti and sari and the intimacies of underwear are not very romantic for the Occidental reader but they are full of poetic and often tender associations to the people themselves. To aborigines who are always engrossed in matters of kinship and relationship the Table of Affinity is a thing of excitement and beauty. To very poor people living on the borderline of starvation the price of things and references to food and drink, to little presents and their few cheap luxuries, are fit subjects of poetry.

Many of the songs are, of course, very difficult. Some of them seem to have developed out of the riddle, a popular form of entertainment among these people. Riddles are actually sung as dance songs during the SAILA competitions. Other riddles are asked and must be answered before a bride is allowed to leave her parents' house. Many of the songs have the severely condensed form, the obscure reference and the unusual symbolism that is normally characteristic of a riddle. The task of translating is thus difficult enough; that of interpretation is impossible without a wide knowledge of the social background.

Take, for example, this Doha song—

*Are are bhai re  
Gaye daihān aur lāne'kharsi  
Ek dauki aur banāle  
Tela khohābe ghursi  
Hai re.*

Such a song cannot be translated into English. Consider the three key-words on which in the ears of the singers its poetic merit depends. The first is *daihān*, the cows' resting-place, where the cattle gather at noon beneath shady trees in a clearing far out in the forest, and the AHIR sits by playing on his flute. You may see this scene again and again in the old Pahari paintings, and the very thought of it arouses emotion and delight in the mind of any Indian. But we have no word for this in English and practically nothing in Western life to correspond with the idea. The second important word

in the poem is *kharsi*, the dry scraps of dung which are collected by girls from the cows' resting-place and brought home for banking the fire. The sweet-smelling, clean and charming cow-dung so dear to the heart of every Indian villager is not only unfamiliar to the Western reader, but may be positively repulsive to him. When Pope wished to emphasize the miserable death of Villiers he described the scene of his suffering as being

- In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half hung,
- The floor of plaster and the walls of dung.

Aldous Huxley describes how profoundly impressed he had been with those walls of dung. Indeed, 'they still disturb my imagination. They express, for me, the Essential Horror.'

The third word is *ghursi*. This is an earthen bowl made, not by a potter, but by the women of the house themselves, which is filled with cow-dung scraps and lit. It smoulders slowly giving out a very fair heat and generally lasts all night. To prepare the *ghursi* is one of the most intimate services that a woman can render her husband. She puts it under the bed to keep them warm as they sleep together, and people who are too poor to afford mattresses and blankets depend greatly on their fires. The thought of the *ghursi* corresponds emotionally to ideas of firelight glowing on a loved face or flickering flames illuminating a dark cosy room in Europe.

The song, therefore, may be translated,

You go to the cow's resting-place  
And bring the scraps of dung  
Get a new wife  
And she will prepare your *ghursi*.

Not a very satisfactory version, and certainly not one that would arouse poetic feeling in any Western reader, yet in the original the suggestion that the new wife will prepare the *ghursi* is itself an intimate and romantic thought, for to prepare the fire for the lover is to arouse the fire of love.

This example—and we might easily give scores of such songs—will serve to illustrate the difficulty of translating verses that are so intimately connected with the life of the people and the countryside. A whole commentary is needed to understand them properly.

This book therefore must be taken as a supplement. Two of the tribes whose songs we have recorded have been

exhaustively described in *The Baiga* and *The Agaria*. Our *Songs of the Forest* gives 290 songs, *The Baiga* 340 and *The Agaria* 14. These represent the cream of our collection of several thousands. In this volume we attempt to supplement the songs already published elsewhere, to discuss in more detail than hitherto their technical form and to relate them as fully as space will permit to their ethnographic background. We will not, however, repeat too much of what has already been written elsewhere.

The neglect, both by scientists and artists, of the Indian folk-song is astonishing. For a long time only religious and didactic verses were recorded. Gover admits that he dared not translate erotica, and speaks of 'a learned and estimable missionary who has been publicly condemned because he would faithfully translate a noble poem without a really impure thought in it, and was therefore compelled to commit the awful crime of likening a woman's bosom to a pomegranate.' In *The Poetry of the Orient* not a single folk-song has been anthologized. We have turned over thousands of pages of the great volumes of the Ethnographic Survey—Thurston, Risley, Enthoven, Anantakrishna Iyer, Russell and Hiralal—these are books of the dark half of the month: the light of the moon of verse does not shine through them.

Yet the songs are important, not only because the music, form and content of verse is itself part of a people's life but even more because in songs, in charms, in actually fixed and established documents we have the most authentic and unshakable witnesses to ethnographic fact. Anthropology has passed the stage when a report had only to appear in print to be accepted. Today we want to know whether the report is true. The anthropologist must not only be a detective, he must be a magistrate. In making up his mind he can have no better evidence than songs.

If you want to know the story of my life  
Then listen to my Karma.

The songs are not all the evidence, but they are an important part of it. They round off and complete the picture. They are much nearer real life than are the folk-tales, for these seem to represent an escape from life rather than a reproduction of it.

Let us take one example: the tradition of domestic fidelity and the duration of marriage. Among the Muria of Bastar

State there is a very high degree of marital fidelity and out of 2000 marriages examined only 49 had ended in divorce. The songs of the Muria reflect this situation. Although they are not wanting in love interest the theme of the deserted lover and the faithless wife and husband is almost unknown. But in Mandla where in a single village examined the divorce rate was no less than 56 per cent, the songs abound with descriptions of maidens betrayed, of broken hearts and of the faithlessness of man. Indeed in Mandla the song is often used as itself an instrument of seduction, and elopements are arranged and assignations made by what we may call code messages sung in the form of Karma or Dadaria.

Again the great variety of the Bastar songs witnesses to the fullness of its undisturbed tribal life. There are songs for festivals of every kind, scores of songs to accompany children's games, songs for dancing expeditions. In Mandla, where tribal life has largely decayed, there is little variety in the types of song. Half a dozen different kinds of dance, the Jawara festival, the marriage songs, craft and children's songs compose such variety as we have.

In most of these songs, of course, verse is wedded to the dance and to some extent depends on it. But we have today the curious situation that in these hills, though the songs remain, the dance is dying out. There is now a good deal of confusion about what song should be sung to what dance, and the dance songs are already being sung by the fireside or by lover to lover in bed rather than on the public dancing-ground. There will be a melancholy interest in watching during the next twenty years how far the disappearance of the dance will alter the style and rhythm of the songs that used to be wedded to it.

For one of the most tragic things about the contact of the aboriginal with civilization is the destruction of art and culture that so frequently follows. William Morris once spoke of the danger 'that the present course of civilization would destroy the beauty of life.' Among Indian aborigines that is not only a danger but a fact. S. C. Roy has spoken of a 'loss of interest in life' among the Birhor and Korwa, J. H. Hutton of psychical apathy and physical decline in the Andamans, J. P. Mills of the 'awful monotony of village life' and its 'unspeakable drabness' in Christianized Assam. Sometimes this destruction is caused by outsiders, by well-meaning but rather unintelligent 'uplifters' and social reformers; sometimes the evil comes from within.

India is all too full of people like Mr Pumblechook who, it will be remembered, could not see a small boy without trying to benefit him by setting him problems in mental arithmetic. The Pumblechooks of India try very hard to make the aboriginal good: they only succeed in making him dull. It is hard to convince the missionary and reformer of whatever religion that the romance and gaiety of tribal life is necessary for its preservation. An Orissa Committee has urged the abolition of the village dormitory. The American Baptist Mission in Assam has stopped the great Feasts of Merit and with them the very few occasions on which the monotony of village life is broken. Any policy of Prohibition will ultimately destroy the dancing and many of the religious festivals of the people.

More commonly movements for 'reform' appear to arise almost spontaneously. Seligman has described such mass obsessional neuroses which often take the form of new religions. In Papua five new faiths came into being 'under the stress of conflict due to white influence'. The apocalyptic message of Tokerna ordered the abolition of European utensils, luxuries and the killing of hundreds of pigs. Seligman compares this with the commands of Nongquase, the South African diviner, at whose command the Amaxosa in 1856 killed many thousands of their cattle and foretold that, when the cattle were killed, old chiefs would rise from the dead and there would be a miraculous supply of grain.

It would take a whole book to study similar mass neuroses in India, but we may illustrate their general tendency by a few examples. They are often marked by delusions of grandeur—the desire to recapture a former dignity—and by destructiveness. The Maria throw away their dancing dress, the Muria cut down thousands of trees, many tribes kill pigs and chickens. In 1924, the Ho of the Kolhan (Bihar) met at Lumpunguto and decided to stop their ancient songs and dances because 'they were looked down on by their cultured neighbours as very low and degrading', because their boys' health was damaged by late hours spent in dancing and their morals injured, and because they involved unnecessary waste of time and energy.

The destruction of beauty is always evil but never more so than when it means robbing the poorest of the poor of the few treasures that they have. The great Karma dance of the Gond is a precious and lovely thing; the Dadaria songs

alone are enough to redeem their culture from mediocrity. The Saila dance is splendid recreation and exercise. Yet all this is rapidly being destroyed by so-called reformers who leave nothing in its place except the filth of Holi and the obscenity of the marriage abuse.

But it must be remembered that this passion for the destruction of beautiful things is not confined to India. In his speech at the Sexual Reform Congress in 1929 Bernard Shaw reminded his hearers that they were not to expect that democracy would mean real freedom. Modern democracy, he said, 'has become associated with ideas of liberty because it has abolished certain methods of political oppression, and we are apt to think that what makes for liberty in one thing will make for liberty in all things'. But this is not so. The more the people at large have to do with Government the more will the intellectuals and artists have to fight for their ideas and perhaps for their lives. Bernard Shaw illustrated his point by an anecdote which is relevant to the Indian situation. Cecil Sharp was a collector of many peasant songs especially in Somerset. He began there in the rectory of the Rev C. L. Marson. 'One day they were walking in the rectory grounds near an enclosed fruit garden. Cecil Sharp heard a man on the other side of the wall singing a song, to what seemed to him to be a beautiful tune. He immediately noted it down, and said to Marson, "Who is that singing?" "He is my gardener", was the reply. Sharp insisted on finding out whether he had any more songs. He went in, full of the enthusiasm of the artist who had discovered something beautiful; and they told the man that they had heard him singing. He instantly threw down his spade, and called God to witness that he was an honest and decent man who had never sung a song in his life, and was not going to be accused of such debauchery and wickedness by any gentleman.

'They were amazed, because as members of our cultivated classes they did not understand that to the mass of the people art and beauty are nothing but forms of debauchery. They had the greatest trouble in persuading the gardener that they were both of them just as great blackguards as he was; and then he told them where they would find other songs, and undertook to introduce them to the singers.'

The moral drawn by Bernard Shaw from this story illuminates the situation in the Maikal Hills today. Slowly there is creeping over that lovely countryside the horrible

belief that poetry and art are wrong and that if the aboriginal communities are to win respect and rise in the social scale they must rob their lips of beauty and their limbs of ordered movement.

Of course, the decline of the Indian folk-song is not only due to organized propaganda. There are many other causes. Alfred Williams has carefully studied the causes for the decay of the folk-song in England, and his analysis is so valuable and has so much bearing on conditions that either have come into being or will shortly come into being in India, that we make no apology for quoting him at length.

'What, now, is the reason of the discontinuance and disappearance of the folk-song? Of course, there are many reasons. The dearth, or, at any rate, the restricting of the fairs, and, consequently, of the opportunities of disseminating the ballad-sheets is one cause of its decline. The closing of many of the old village inns, the discontinuance of the harvest-home and other farm feasts, the suspension and decay of May games, morris dancing, church festivals, wassailing, and mumming are other obvious reasons. Another factor was the advent of the church organ and the breaking up of the old village bands of musicians. That dealt a smashing blow at music in the villages. Previous to the arrival of the church organ, every little village and hamlet had its band, composed of the fiddle, bass viol, piccolo, clarinet, cornet, the "horse's leg", and the trumpet, or "serpent". They were played every Sunday in church. But they did not solely belong to the church. All the week they were free to be used for the entertainment of the people. The musicians had to be continually practising, and much of it was done in public. As a matter of fact, the villages were never without music. And the need of the band kept the wits of the performers fully alive. They laboured to make and keep themselves proficient, and the training they took both educated them and exerted an unmistakable influence upon the everyday life of their fellows. But when the organ came, the village band was dismissed from the church; they were not wanted any more. Their music was despised. There was no further need of them, and the bands broke up. For a while the fiddle sounded at the inns and at the farm feast, and was soon heard no more.'

'Another reason for the disappearance of the folk-song is that the life and condition of things in the villages, and throughout the whole countryside, have vastly changed of

late. Education has played its part. The instruction given to the children at village schools proved antagonistic to the old minstrelsy. Dialect and homely language were discountenanced. Teachers were imported from the towns, and they had little sympathy with village life and customs. The words and spirit of the songs were misunderstood, and the tunes were counted too simple. The construction of railways, the linking up of villages with other districts, and contact with large towns and cities had an immediate and permanent effect upon the minstrelsy of the countryside. Many of the village labourers migrated to the towns, or to the colonies, and most of them no longer cared for the old ballads, or were too busily occupied to remember them. Before the middle of the nineteenth century the writing of even moderately good folk-songs had ceased; all that have been produced since then belong to another and an inferior order, approaching to what is commonly known as the popular song of today. At the same time, the singing of the old songs went on as long as the fairs and harvest-homes were held, and even after they were discontinued, till they began to be rigidly discountenanced, or altogether forbidden at the inns. This was the most unkind and fatal repulse of all. It was chiefly brought about, I am told, not by any desire of the landlord, but by the harsh and strict supervision of the police. They practically forbade singing. The houses at which it was held, those at which the poor labourers commonly gathered, were marked as disorderly places; the police looked upon song-singing as a species of rowdyism. Their frequent complaints and threats to the landlords filled them with misgivings; the result was that they were forced, as a means of self-protection, to request their customers not to sing on the premises, or, at any rate, not to allow themselves to be heard. The crestfallen and disappointed labourers accordingly held their peace. The songs, since they could no longer be sung in public, were relegated to oblivion; hundreds have completely died out, and will be heard no more. The gramophone and the cinema have about completed the work of destruction, and finally sealed the doom of the folk-song and ballad as they were commonly known.<sup>1</sup>

Devendra Satyarthi has pointed out that 'India's national movement does not seem to have recognized the importance of India's folk-songs as yet', and he quotes Freda Bedi as saying

<sup>1</sup> A. Williams, *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames* (London, 1923), 23f.

that 'Many things go towards making a national movement a living entity : the spirit of common effort, adequate organization, leaders, and very important, a common tradition. In forming a nation this national literature plays a big role. The Abbey Theatre movement, the work of Yeats and A.E. with their band of workers, nurtured the Irish fight for independence. The songs of Plunkett, himself a martyr for the Irish cause, were enshrined in the hearts of Irishmen after the successful wartime rebellion . . . It is significant that the growth of interest in the "songs of the people" is a factor in post-war development and that it coincides with the "new nationalism" and radical trends in the world today. Love of folk-lore is . . . inherent in the cultural background of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republics, because of the emphasis on everything that comes spontaneously from the people. All efforts to create a rich tradition of national culture, not a culture grafted on to the old stock by a civilization that is strange in ideas and expression, but an indigenous one that springs from the very heart of the people, must be welcomed.'

Devendra Satyarthi concludes that 'it is high time for nationalist India to arouse the imagination of our people to look upon their folk-songs as synonymous with national literature, and to call for an All-India Folk-Songs Revival Movement.

'Let us hope that the national movement of "India reborn" will soon recognize the real value of India's folk-songs, and will give impetus to writers all over the country to make an enormous collection, from the living lips of the people, of almost all the songs, ballads and all other types of folklore —the legends, folk-tales, proverbs and riddles. Folk-songs should also be sought out by our new writers and poets for the unparalleled fund of inspiration they have as the heart-beats of Mother India, as did Pushkin in Russia.'

In translating the songs we have tried to keep as near as possible to the originals in meaning, though we have frankly abandoned any attempt to reproduce the form. Eunice Tietjens, in the Introduction to her anthology *The Poetry of the Orient*, divides the translators of Oriental poetry into four principal classes. There are those who reproduce as closely as possible the rhythmic and rhyme scheme of the original, sticking as close to the sense as possible. There are then those who feel that to reproduce a form exactly is to distort it, since the ear which must receive this form is not the same ear as that for which it was written. These translate the

rhythm into one native to them, hoping thus to give the impression that the original gives to its own readers. The third type of translator is he who finding that it is very seldom possible to do justice to both form and content sticks to the content and lets the form take care of itself. He translates into free verse whatever the original form may have been. The fourth translator is he who despairing of doing justice to the original in any form whatever sets down in prose of scrupulous exactitude the precise shade of meaning as he sees it.

In India there have been few attempts like those of Louise Hammond for Chinese poetry to reproduce the exact rhyme and rhythm of the originals. Macdonell did something, but the majority of scholars belong to the second class; Powys Mathers' astonishing version of the *Chaurapanchasika* is indeed rather an interpretation than a translation. Dr and Mrs Seligman translated their Vedda songs into prose, and N. E. Parry did the same for his often beautiful Lakher songs.

A. G. Shirreff is a representative of the second type of translator. Indeed he says expressly in his introduction to *Hindi Folk-Songs* that 'in the translations which follow my aim has been to give as accurate a rendering as possible in a form which may remind English readers of folk-poetry with which they are very familiar'. He finds many resemblances between the Hindi songs of the United Provinces and English songs and ballads. Devendra Satyarthi considers that this idea of rendering songs in verse with the aim of reminding English people of their own ballads is dangerous, and he points out how Shirreff translates the word *sāri* as 'gown', and *ta yahi ranban men* as 'under the greenwood tree'. This was probably also the method of such workers as Griffith, R. C. Dutt and Sir Edwin Arnold, who have produced poems that are often beautiful in themselves, but which cannot be regarded as satisfactory translations.

W. G. Archer has laid down some admirable principles for the translation of Indian folk-poetry into English. A poem, he says, 'is a combination of certain images, certain rhythms and certain effects of music, and only if a translation could provide an exact parallel for each of these elements could it be perfect. In actual fact, a translation from a tribal language into English can parallel only one of these elements. Differences of verbal structure are so great that if parallel images are retained, the rhythms will be different. If the

rhythms are maintained, the images will suffer, while no form of English can reproduce the musical effects of Hindi, Uraon, Gondi, or Mundari. "Certain things", said Ezra Pound, "are translatable from one language to another, a tale or an image will translate; music will practically never translate." A translation becomes possible, therefore, only when there is no attempt at all at complete correspondence.

'We believe that the best solution so far reached is that of Arthur Waley. In translating from the Chinese Arthur Waley was faced with problems which are identical with those of Indian languages. His solution has been a series of versions in which the literal meaning of the translation corresponds with the literal meaning of the original. In particular, the images are never added to and never subtracted from. The poem as a system of images remains in translation what it is in the original. Instead, however, of attempting a duplication of rhyme, rhythm, or music, his versions use the rhythms and sound effects which come most naturally to the English. The original form is abandoned and instead the effort is to create a new form which is valid for a contemporary sensibility.'

This principle of not adding any new images is of very great importance. Arthur Waley himself says, 'Above all, considering images to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original.'<sup>1</sup> A vivid example of the danger of adding new images to a translation is seen in the works of Dryden whose translations are really remarkable original poems which have been suggested by classic models. In his famous stanza on Fortune occur the lines,

I can enjoy her while she's kind;  
But when she dances in the wind,  
And shakes the wings and will not stay,  
I puff the prostitute away.

This is supposed to be a translation of the twenty-ninth Ode of the Third Book of Horace. But the excellent line which was so much admired by Thackeray—"I puff the prostitute away"—is represented in the original simply by the words *resigno quae dedit*. Here an entirely new image is added to the poem, for which there is no warrant in the original. Caution in this matter is all the more important when we consider the essential place that symbolism holds in village poetry.

<sup>1</sup> A. Waley, 170 *Chinese Poems* (London, 1928), 19.

We have, therefore, followed as far as possible the example of Arthur Waley and have worked on the principles laid down by W. G. Archer, that is to say, we have avoided rhyme and have made no attempt to reproduce the form of the original. We have tried to represent the original meaning as literally as possible, within the limits of the demands of poetry, and we have been scrupulous in introducing no word or image that is unrepresented in the original.

To illustrate the different methods of translation it may be of interest to compare here versions made by Laurence Housman of songs in two of our previous collections. In *Songs of the Forest* appears the following song :

The wind and the rain are beating down.  
Take shelter or your clothes will be drenched.

The rain is falling, falling.

In all my dreams I searched for you,  
But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

I have built a fence by the roadside.

I have made a fence for my garden.

Where have you hidden, thief of my heart?

In all my dreams I searched for you,  
But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

I have cut tall bamboos; I have cut short bamboos.

Large are the hollows of the dwarf bamboos.

The thief who crouched behind my fence has hidden in  
those hollows.

In all my dreams I searched for you,  
But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

This is Laurence Housman's version :

The wind and rain are beating down,  
Come in, don't drown ! Take shelter, do !

The rain, the rain : O, hear it beat !

In all my dreams I searched for you  
But could not find one trace again,  
Or hear the echo of your feet.

Between my garden and the track  
I built a wall, I fenced it round,  
I made it safe as holy ground.

O loved, O lost, come back, come back !  
 Thief of my Heart ! I search for you,  
 I search, and still no footprint meet,  
 Nor hear the echo of your feet.

I built my wall of tall bamboo,  
 Of tall, and short, with hollow stem :  
 And in the hollow where they grew  
 The hidden thief lay crouched in them.  
 Now all my dreams I search for you,  
 And up and down the world I beat :  
 Rain beating on the tall bamboo  
 Has drowned the echo of your feet.

Again, in *The Baiga* appears the following :

In the midst of the river, the tree is full of leaves.  
 Among the leaves, monkeys are hiding—  
 They are eating the fruit that grows there.  
 O when will I meet my true love  
 Who will put aside the leaves,  
 And pluck the oranges that grow  
 So round and firm upon my tree ?

Laurence Housman versified this as :

On an island in the river is a tree full of leaves ;  
 And deep in among them, the monkeys, little thieves,  
 Come stealing the fruit which is hiding there below—  
 The fruit that hangs waiting there for thee.

Oh, when will my love come, and drive away the thieves,  
 And climb into the branches, and push aside the leaves,  
 And pluck from their shadows the oranges that grow  
 So full, and firm, and round upon my tree ?

One of the greatest problems facing a collector of folk-songs is what to do with the originals. The ideal thing is of course to print the original side by side with the translation. But this has many practical disadvantages. It is difficult enough for a publisher to undertake a book of this kind in any case. If it is burdened with a large quantity of matter which not one in a hundred readers will understand, the task of publication becomes almost impossible. Then again Hindi is a language

with a phonetic script very different from our own and there is no really satisfactory way of reproducing Hindi originals, especially in their obscure dialect forms, in roman characters. Even if that were done, there cannot be more than a few dozen Occidental readers sufficiently acquainted with the dialects in which these songs are composed to read them with any pleasure, while few indeed are the Indian readers who can bear to read any Indian language printed in roman script. We have decided therefore at some personal sacrifice (for the inclusion of originals so familiar to ourselves would have given us much pleasure) to omit them in the present volume and to publish them separately in the Devanagari script for the benefit of Indian readers and of such philologists as may desire to study them. This is the method that has been adopted by W. G. Archer in his important collection of the songs and riddles of Chota Nagpur and it has the double advantage of not only guaranteeing the authenticity of the poems, but of enabling such villagers as are literate to read them for themselves.

This collection is offered as a collection of songs rather than of poems. In the first place the description is more accurate, for every verse in the book has been sung and has been neither written nor recited; and secondly we have deliberately cast our net rather widely so as to illustrate as many aspects of village life as possible. The great majority of village songs have little poetry in them, and the more primitive we get the less poetry we seem to find; Gondi, for example, does not seem to lend itself well to poetic inspiration; the Juang, whose songs are full of poetry, do not sing (though they still talk) in their ancient tongue, but use Oriya. Take one of W. V. Grigson's songs, for example, in his *Maria Gonds of Bastar*:

Aleya reloya relo  
Kokoreng koreng  
Why are we not singing?  
Kokoreng koreng  
Come, lads, come!  
Kokoreng koreng  
This kind of song is no song,

and so on. How is any one to make a poem out of that?

Take another example, one of the first Indian folk-songs to be put into English, by Dalton who undoubtedly had the

spirit and the tongue of a true poet. This is a 'close imitation' of a song sung 'by a rockbroken stream with wooded banks, the girls on one side, the lads on the other, singing to the accompaniment of the babbling brook in true bucolic style.'

**Boys**

A kanchan flower bring to us  
We'll listen whilst you sing to us.

**GIRLS**

We'll gather greens for dinner, dear!  
But cannot think of singing here.

**Boys**

A handful that of chaff and straw,  
Us boys you surely beat at jaw!

**GIRLS (*pouting*)**

Ah! birds that chirp and fly away!  
With us you care not then to stay?

**Boys (*amorous*)**

Yes, yes, we've caught some pretty fish,  
To part, dear girls, is not our wish.

**GIRLS (*pleased*)**

The clouds disperse, the day looks fair,  
Come back then lads our homes to share.

**Boys**

No! by the bar tree blossom! But  
You come with us and share our hut.

**GIRLS**

The birds sing merrily, we agree  
To leave pa ma and go with thee.

This is not really, as it sounds at first, something for *The Stuffed Owl*; it is an attempt to reproduce the way the boys and girls improvise songs at one another. Most of the Dadaria

in Mandla are of very poor quality; they are improvisations and they are usually rhymed—and rhyme quickly introduces a cheapness and vulgarity into village song. But the scientist must preserve the cheap and vulgar as well as the high and beautiful.

The music of the songs was recorded by Walter Kaufmann in 1940 and an account of them was published by him in *The Musical Quarterly* for the following year, to which a valuable note was added by Curt Sachs, author of *The World History of Dance*.

Sachs refers to these Gond melodies as an 'important collection' and describes their 'music as simple and primitive as any tribal songs in the six continents. The typical Dadaria is opened by a stereotyped phrase (as in Breton bagpipe tunes), which begins just below the final of the scale and ascends, without halftones, the distance of a fifth; the melody remains at this level for a while—sometimes as a mere psalmodic percussion—and descends stepwise the distance of a fourth to the final; a closing episode alternates the final with its upper neighbour. The range of a Dadaria is from four to six degrees, and its skeleton is the interval of a fourth. Several Dadaria are without halftones, while others are diatonic, mostly in the Lydian mode. Thus they represent an alloy of anhemitonic and diatonic, of chant and actual melody, both ascending and descending, in modal tetrachords.'

'The Karma songs are more archaic; one of them has only two tones, which lie a second apart, as have the melodies of certain Patagonian tribes and of the Vedda in the interior of Ceylon. This two-tone style is retained as a nucleus even when some other notes are introduced, and it is a fascinating experience to study the biological evolution from No. 17, through No. 17a, to No. 20, an evolution that presents us with a growth in two directions by introducing both halftones and tetrachordal structure. Moreover, these melodies, so strikingly similar to each other that we are tempted to take them for variants only, make clear how the high civilizations, drawing from the songs of the tribes that they had absorbed, came to the conception of melodic patterns, of ragas and maqamat, of Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Walter Kaufmann, 'Folk Songs of the Gond and Baiga', *The Musical Quarterly* (New York, 1941), xxvii, 280-88. In this book, Kaufmann's No. 17 is No. 11 and his No. 20 is No. 14. No. 17a is not printed here.

When we approach the pleasant task of acknowledging our obligations to our friends, before all others we must admit our debt to W. G. Archer. Of his beautiful and important book, *The Blue Grove*, he once wrote to us that 'but for *Songs of the Forest* it is certain that *The Blue Grove* would never have been written'. It is equally certain that but for *The Blue Grove* and its successor, *The Wedding of the Writers*, the present volume would not have been written either. The perfection of his technique, the beauty of his translations, the subtlety of his interpretation, the range of his knowledge, his devotion to Indian art and culture has been a continual inspiration and challenge to us in our task.

We must also acknowledge the devotion and inspiration of Devendra Satyarthi to Indian folk-literature. This writer, who has declared that the opinion of Andrew Fletcher, that a nation's ballads are more important than its laws, has touched his dreams, has wandered all over India and made a vast collection of village-songs. 'I have not been able', he says, 'to express my love for my country in political activity, nor could any form of social service suit me. I simply took to the songs of my people. The colour, fire, and sparkle of the peasants' poetry made an interesting story for me. A nation reborn must be inspired by its folk-songs.'

In the long labour of collection, translation and interpretation, which has now continued for ten years, we have had many helpers. Sunderlal Baghel and Sunderlal Narbada Prasad have helped us to collect songs from the beginning. Sounu Pardhan and his wife Phula, both of them poets, have been invaluable in interpretation. Baigin Gondin, Kachari Pardhanin and Ahaliya Pankin have thrown light on obscure references which only a woman's mind could explain and have themselves given many songs. Haricharan Syam, a Pardhan youth, Chandu, Jantri, Ram Pratap Baghel, Kartik Parteti and others have also helped. To Kosi Elwin a special debt is due for the singing of many beautiful songs.

Mr Rambharose Agarwal has been indefatigable in his assistance. He has collected many songs for us, and his advice and his unrivalled knowledge of Mandla District has always been at our disposal.

Part of the expenses of the preparation of this book were covered by a research grant from Merton College. Its publication was assisted by the Government of the Central

Provinces and Berar. Little, however, would have been possible without the support and friendship of Mr J. R. D. Tata and Mr J. P. Patel and of our friends (who must remain anonymous) on the staff of the Oxford University Press. To the Diocesan Press, Madras, belongs the credit of printing this and its companion volume with speed and precision at a time of unparalleled difficulty in the history of book-production.

From the day we first settled in aboriginal company, we have been impressed with the fact that the Indian 'primitive'—for all his material poverty and lack of conventional learning—is not to be pitied and 'uplifted', but rather to be respected and admired. Nothing in his life is more admirable than his flair for poetry, his sense of rhythm, his love of art. We believe that if he would be rightly guided, he would not be ashamed of these great things and that if he would employ them more enthusiastically he would soon win an honoured place in the social structure of modern India.

PATANGARH VILLAGE  
MANDLA DISTRICT  
INDIA  
1 May 1944

VERRIER ELWIN  
SHAMRAO HIVALE

## NOTE

To make this collection as representative as possible, twenty-two songs have been reprinted from *The Baiga* (John Murray, 1939), nine from *Songs of the Forest* (Allen and Unwin, 1936), three from *The Agaria* (Oxford University Press, 1942), and one from *Phulmat of the Hills* (John Murray, 1937). Twenty of the Pardhan songs were printed in *Man in India*, Vol. xxii, and twelve of the Dadaria now appearing in this volume in *Man in India*, Vol. xxiii. The rest of the six hundred and nineteen songs have not been printed before.



## THE KARMA SONGS



## THE KARMA DANCE

DANCES with the name of Karam or Karma have been recorded for many different tribes; indeed Dalton speaks of the Karam dance as 'universal'.<sup>1</sup> He himself describes it as danced by the Kisan or Nagesar,<sup>2</sup> by the Koiri,<sup>3</sup> and by the Kol of Chota Nagpur who cut a branch of the karam tree, plant it in the dancing-ground and dance round it—a ceremony apparently intended to ensure the fertility of the crops.<sup>4</sup> The Majhwar dance the Karma at the beginning and end of the rains<sup>5</sup> and the Korwa dance it in autumn to benefit the crops and when rain is deficient.<sup>6</sup>

In Chota Nagpur and Orissa, the dance is associated with a festival that resembles the Jawara and Bhajli ceremonies of Mandla. The Chota Nagpur tribes observe the festival in August, in the middle of the rains, when the rice is still standing, between transplanting and harvest;<sup>7</sup> the Bhuiya keep it in late October or November, after the rice has been cut but before it has been threshed.<sup>8</sup>

Dalton describes the observance of the festival among the Uraon. After fasting, on the evening of the first day, 'a party of young people, of both sexes, proceed to the forest, and cut a young Karma tree or the branch of one, bearing which they return in triumph—dancing, and singing, and beating drums—and plant it in the middle of the Akhra (dancing-ground). After the performance of a sacrifice to the Karma Deota by the Pahn, the villagers feast, and the night is passed in dancing and revelry. Next morning, all may be seen at an early hour in holiday array; the elders in groups, under the fine old tamarind trees that surround the Akhra; and the youth of both sexes, arm-linked in a huge circle, dancing round the Karma tree, which, festooned with garlands, decorated with strips of coloured cloth and sham bracelets and necklets of plaited

<sup>1</sup> E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), 135.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>5</sup> R. V. Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv, 153.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., iii, 576.

<sup>7</sup> W. G. Archer, *The Blue Grove* (London, 1940), 43; S. C. Roy, *The Birhors* (Ranchi, 1925), 358; S. C. Roy, *Orissa Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), 240 ff.

<sup>8</sup> S. C. Roy, *The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa* (Ranchi, 1935), 240.

straw, and with the bright faces and merry laughter of the young people encircling it, reminds one of the gift-bearing tree so often introduced at our own great festival. Preparatory to the festival, the daughters of the head men of the village cultivate blades of barley in a peculiar manner. The seed is sown in moist, sandy soil, mixed with a quantity of turmeric, and the blades sprout and unfold of a pale yellow, or primrose colour. On the Karma day, these blades are taken up by the roots, as if for transplanting, and carried in baskets by the fair cultivators to the Akhra. They approach the Karma tree, and, prostrating themselves reverentially, place before it some of the plants. They then go round the company, and, like bridesmaids distributing wedding favours, present to each person a few of the yellow barley blades; and all soon appear, wearing, generally in their hair, this distinctive decoration of the festival. Then all join merrily in the Karma dances. The morning revel closes with the removal of the Karma; it is taken away by the merry throng and thrown into a stream or a tank, but after another feast, dancing and drinking are resumed.<sup>1</sup>

Roy considered that this festival had been borrowed by the Uraon from their Hindu neighbours and combined with their own Kadlota festival performed for the purification of the village and the fertility of the crops. He adds many details, as that the branches of the tree are called the Karam Raja, and that red baskets of grain are placed before them. Girls carry the branches from house to house where they are anointed with oil and scarlet powder. The fertility aspect of the festival is further emphasized by the fact that the girls put cucumbers in their Karam baskets to represent babies.

An important part of the ceremony is the recitation of the Karam legend. Dalton gives a version of this from the *Bhavishya Purana*; Roy gives another, different, tale of seven brothers as current among the Uraon; the Bhuiya have another version.

The Karam festival was witnessed at the beginning of December 1942, at the Bhuiya village of Champajor in Keonjhar State. A shrine beautifully decorated with flowers was erected in the middle of the dancing-ground in front of the village dormitory. Branches of the Karam tree were cut and placed in the shrine. All night the boys and girls danced

<sup>1</sup> Dalton, op. cit., 259.

before it, and a priest at midnight recited the story of Karam Raja and Karam Rani. In the morning, after a long period of dancing, the Karam tree was taken in procession round the village.

The story at Champajor village was of the usual kind that long ago when the old men and women were dancing, their hands and feet began to swell, and Karam Raja and Karam Rani came to say that they would only be cured if the boys and girls kept a feast in their honour. In Nagira, in Bonai State, the story was that there was once a rich man with seven sons and seven daughters. The sons, but not the daughters, were married. The head of the house went away for a long period of trading, and in his absence an old Brahmin came and finding the daughters and the daughters-in-law working hard at the affairs of the estate told them there would be no profit in their work unless they honoured Karam Raja and Karam Rani. They asked the Brahmin to stay with them and he taught them how to keep the festival. In the middle of their dancing and drinking the merchant came home, and supposing his children to be wasting their time beat them and destroyed the shrine they had made. Karam Raja and Karam Rani then went away to the jungle and sat beneath their tree. The merchant lost his money, and at last in despair went to the tree and brought a branch on his shoulders to his house. He celebrated the festival and his wealth was restored.

But in Ronta, Bonai State, the Karam festival was associated with a story very similar to those that have already been given in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*. Long ago there was a Bhuiya merchant who had seven sons. Six of these were married and worked hard in the house. The seventh who was unmarried did nothing but worship the Karam tree. He would fast all day, and then dance before it, beating a drum made of a plantain stalk. As a result of this worship great wealth came to the merchant's house, and the six brothers grew jealous. They broke the boy's drum and drove him from his home.

When the worship of the Karam tree stopped, the merchant lost his money. He was an old man and he thought, 'I will go to Bhagavan and ask what is the matter.' On his way he met an old woman and when she learned that he was going to Bhagavan she said, 'Ask him why it is that when I use my rice-husker the end strikes against my breast and hurts me till I am ready to die.'

After a time the old man met a merchant who asked him to inquire from Bhagavan why it was that, though he had dug a tank and it was full of water, they could not use it because of the insects that infested it.

Then the old man came to a garden and its owner said to him, 'When you meet Bhagavan, ask him why all the fruit on my mango trees decays.'

At last the old man reached Bhagavan and said, 'In former days I could not find room to store my wealth, but now it is all gone.' 'It is lost', said Bhagavan, 'because your six sons drove out their younger brother and neglected the worship of Karam Raja.'

Then Bhagavan said, 'That old woman has the only rice-husker in the village and she will not allow anyone else to use it. That is why it hurts her breast. That merchant will not let the villagers use his tank, and so it is always full of insects. That gardener will not let anyone else eat his fruit, and so it all decays.'

As the old Bhuiya went home he told the gardener, the merchant and the woman what Bhagavan had said, and when he reached his house he called his youngest son and made him begin the worship of Karam Raja and Karam Rani again. Soon the old man's wealth was restored, and since that day the Bhuiya have observed the Karam festival.

The Gond and Pardhan of Mandla say that the Karma songs originated in Kodia Bhakar (presumably Chang Bhakar) at the same time as Ghanshyam was born in a Bharewa's house. Ghanshyam's umbilical cord was cut by itself without the help of a knife or midwife and his placenta (which was the Karma) ran away to Surguja State. In a dream Ghanshyam had told the Rani of Surguja that he was going to visit her. She made many preparations for his coming and a pole cut from the Karam tree called Karmadar was put up in the dancing-ground.

When the Bharewa found that Ghanshyam and the Karma had run away they pursued them and when they reached Surguja and saw the Karmadar pole they sang,

WHERE were you born Ghanshyam Deo?  
Where did you take your form?  
On earth I was born

In the world I took my form  
 Where did you clear the grass for your dancing-ground  
 Cleaning all four corners  
 Putting lights on the corners?  
 In every village there are shrines in your honour  
 And from the corners of your dancing-ground  
 You have called all the gods to your Karma.

But when they asked the Rani to send the god and the Karma songs back she said to them, 'It was written in your fate (karma) and so they came to me. It is by my good karma that I am able to possess them.'

Since then it is said that the Rani of Surguja never gets up in the morning without singing five Karma songs and before she splits her tooth-twig she sings another five.

Ghanshyam is sometimes supposed to be responsible for giving rain and when there is drought the people sing Karma in his honour.

The Karma tree (*Adina cordifolia*, Hook.<sup>1</sup>) is a tall deciduous tree with cordate leaves, and is distributed throughout India. Its wood is used for building, but the Birhor—and probably other tribes who observe the festival—must not use it for fuel or in their houses.<sup>2</sup> It is not regarded as specially sacred in the Central Provinces or in Bastar, but the *Vishnu Purana* describes how Krishna loved to climb it and hide himself in its thick foliage. It was from a Kadamba tree (which is the same as the Karma) that he leapt into the serpents' pool and subdued Kaliya, the snake king.<sup>3</sup>

The people of the Maikal Hills do not observe the Karma festival today, though a belief in the ceremonial value of the Karma dance persists. In times of drought or calamity, a Panda (priest) may be inspired to declare that a chain of Karma dances must be weaved round the country. Then parties of men and women go from village to village dancing; each place visited takes up the theme in turn, and passes it on. The dance is not now, however, associated with the Karma tree, but many of the ceremonies described for the Uraon can be paralleled in the Jawara festival of Mandla.

Except that at the beginning of the Karma season, which opens in September when the rains are over and continues to the end of the hot weather, there is a ceremony when a Panda

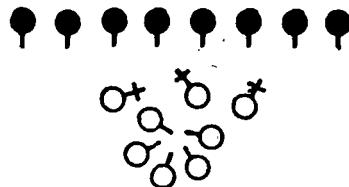
<sup>1</sup> Dalton calls it by its synonym *Nauclea cordifolia*, Willd.

<sup>2</sup> Roy, *The Birhors*, 383.

<sup>3</sup> H. H. Wilson, *The Vishnu Purana* (London, 1864-77), Chap. VII.

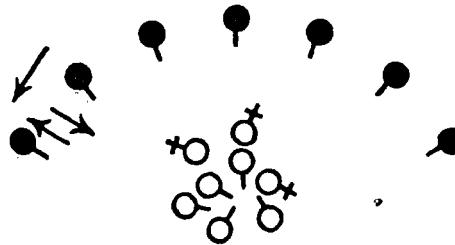
brings a plate with a lighted lamp and rice and salutes each of the dancers in turn, the Karma of the Maikal Hills is a dance and nothing more.

The formation and pattern of the dance is of three main kinds. The Thadi and Lahaki Karma is danced by a line of women facing a group of male drummers and singers.

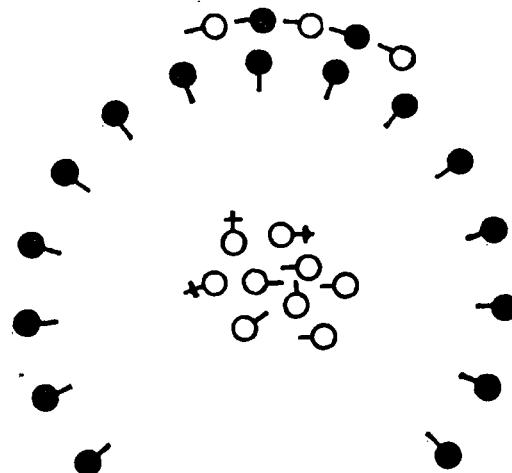


The women remain standing upright for part of the time; at intervals they bend forward and move a few steps up to the group of men and then back. In the Lahaki form, which is danced very quickly and vigorously, the line of women slowly rotates round the men as it moves to and fro.

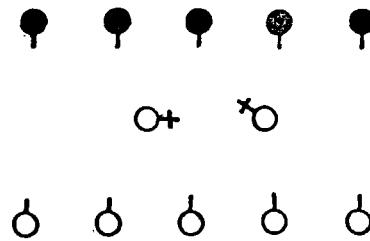
The essence of the Khalaha Karma is that the line of girls should revolve quickly round the group of men. It is a double movement, for the women go in towards the men and round anti-clockwise at the same time.



In some of the more elaborate Baiga dances, the main line of women circles slowly, while a small group of boys and girls with clappers goes round in the opposite direction.



The third kind of pattern is the Jharpat, which implies any kind of dance in which men and women dance opposite each other. This takes many different forms, but its base may be illustrated thus



Sometimes this dance swings simply to and fro; sometimes the whole group rotates slowly, generally anti-clockwise, on its own axis. In the Baigani Dawad variation of this movement, the women remain in line, but the men are in a group; they run quickly to and fro with a pretty tripping step, swinging their feet without touching the ground at the end of each run. In the Baigani Jhumar also the men and women move to and fro opposite each other, but with a slower step. The Badiani Karma, which owes its name to the Badi caste, is a formation of a line of men facing a line of women which circles very quickly with long steps; it sometimes goes so fast that the two lines form a large circle.

These are the main patterns of the Karma. The women always dance hand in hand, sometimes standing erect and sometimes bent well forward. The chief beauty of the dance is in the steps, which often attain a wonderful precision and speed. Many of these have been described in *The Baiga*.

The Karma songs are fitted to the dances, but there is not a very strict rule about this—for it is always possible to adapt a song by inserting extra syllables and varying the amount of repetition. Each dance-pattern can be performed to a number of different tunes.

Most, though not all Karma songs, consist of three parts—the Rag, the Tek and the Ad. The Rag is the introductory portion that lets the dancers know what tune or rhythm is to be used. It consists of a single phrase—*Aho hai, Aho ho hai* and so on—which is not repeated. The Tek is that part of the song which is sung while the people are actually dancing, bent forward and moving about. It is constantly repeated, and may be regarded as a sort of chorus. The Ad is sung in the intervals between the actual dancing, when the women straighten themselves and stand still, only slightly swaying their bodies to and fro.

The songs are usually sung antiphonally, but not like the Dadaria where a second group or individual must answer the first with something new. Here the second group must pick up and repeat whatever the first group gives them.

Occasionally the songs are in rhyme, but more frequently they gain their effect by constant repetition and by assonance. A line like

*Ori re ori koilāri jhori kai din le hobo rāni luka chorī*  
is repeated in whole or in part over and over again. Consider also the effect of

*Hai hai lahari hai ga lahar lahar karai wa lahari hai re.*

Onomatopaeic and echo-words, alliteration and 'internal rhyme' further aid the swing and vigour of the song.

A special feature of the Karma songs is the use of standardized clichés which may be used at any time and to any extent. Expressions like 'Jhe lag be, Don't do it', 'Jhe bolo, Don't say a word', 'Ab dhire dhire dhire, Now do it slowly', 'Nahi āwai, He won't come', 'Chode de be, Let me go', 'Bhalle, bhalle, bhalle, well, well, well', with their sexual suggestiveness, are inserted as an impromptu chorus into any song. There are certain words also that are inserted, irres-

pective of the sense or grammar, to fill out the line and make it fit the music or the dance. Not any words can be used, but *karela* (implying sexual congress), *hansa* (goose), *hira* (diamond), *prān* (life), *bandho* (brother), *dhoki* (deceiver), *chiraiya* (bird) are constantly employed.

The difficulties of recording the songs (quite apart from translating them) are considerable. The actual singing of No 7 may have been something like this—

*O ho ho re hāy*

*Jhe bolo jhe bolo sanja sabera mor hira*  
*Surta āthai chiraiya chiraiya jorike lāne.*  
*Dupār O sanja sabera dhire dhire dhire*  
*Dupār O sanja sabera O karela mor.*

But of this only the words italicized belong to the real song : the others are official improvisations which may or may not be included.

## THE KARMA SONGS

**W**e will now give specimens of the different types of Karma accompanied in many cases by their music, to indicate their form.

### THE KHALAHA KARMA

These are the very popular songs of the lowlands.

2



*Rāg: Oha hāy*

*Tek: Pihāla kon ban khoju ga  
Piha basai pardesh hansāla  
Kon ban khoju re?*

*Ad: Jin bangālin beti jinaki lambi lambi kes  
Apan patila chhodke taje konake desh.*

In what jungle should I seek my love?  
He has settled in a strange country  
In what jungle should I seek my swan?

That Bengali girl with her long long hair  
Has left her husband to seek another land.



*Rāg: O ho a hāy*

*Tek:* *Ek baje ma gādi chhutai*  
*Dui baje ma rel.*  
*Tin baje ma saiya chhutai*  
*Phutai lālten.*  
*Tikat kātoga abato gādi chhutai*  
*Bilāspurkha re.*  
*Ad:* *Na mola khāy jāy*  
*Na mola piy jāy*  
*Na mola kuchhusuhāy.*

At one o'clock the train is off  
 At two o'clock the railway train  
 At three o'clock my lover goes  
 And the lantern breaks.  
 Come, get your ticket, for the train  
 Is off to Bilaspur.

I cannot eat  
 I cannot drink  
 O nothing pleases me.



*Raisuri mālāla bisure āyo ohi narwāma*  
*Raisuri mālāla bisure āyo ga.*

*Rākh dharle bhusa dharle aur dharle chhindi kucha ga.  
Althi kalthi pairi mānjoi ohi narwāma  
Raisuri māla.*

O my coloured necklace !  
I forgot it in that very stream  
I had ashes, I had chaff  
I had a brush of palm leaves  
On either side turning my anklets  
I cleaned them in that very stream  
My coloured necklace.

## KHALAH JHULANIA KARMA

5



*Rāg: Hare-a-hāy.*

*Tek: Karella kaha nikāl gai ga  
Nayana ma jādu dāl  
Chiraiya kaha nikal gai re*

*Ad: Kāri piri churi pahirai  
Bichma pahirai kakana.  
Dinake to najar ma dekhai  
Rāt dethai sapana.*

WHERE has my dark love gone ?  
My bird—she put magic on my eyes—  
Where has she flown away ?  
She has black and yellow bangles  
Brass bracelets in the middle  
By day I see her with my eyes  
At night she's but a dream.

## THE THADI KARMA

This quieter and more monotonous dance seems to allow more room for poetry. It is performed to a number of different tunes.

6



*Rāg: Oho-ho-ho re hā-ā-y.*

*Tek: Sagli umirala maike gamāy to dāre ka laike jābe sasutāra*  
*Dekh to bhala.*

*Ad: Chal chal chalti hai dil hai udāsa*  
*Jal bhitar khade hoke*  
*Marat hai piyāsa ga.*

If you have wasted all your days at home  
 What will you have to take to your husband's house?

Now she is on her way  
 And her heart is sad.  
 She stands in water  
 Yet she is dying of thirst.

7



## Boys

*Rāg: O ho ho re hāy*

*Tek: Sanja sabera sūrta āthai jorike lāne  
Dupār o sanja sabera.*

*Ad: Chola bane hai kaisa pānike phulka  
Hawa lagat ghur jāna.*

## Boys

*Khāle mircha dharle dhirja.*

## GIRLS

IN the evening and the morning  
Comes a longing for my love  
At the midday and the evening and the morning.  
Life is like a bubble on the water  
A touch of wind dissolves it.

Boys (*mockingly*)

EAT some chillies and be patient.

When someone is bitten by a snake, he eats chillies and so long as they taste hot he knows he will recover. So too the lover will come through happily if she has patience.

8

*Rāg: O ho ho re hā-ā-y.*

*Tek: Phul phulai gulābke ya ghamad rahāy  
Bhannāwai ga ki phulphulai tor phule  
Phulwāri ma ga ki phulai jejāma tumhāra re.*

BLOSSOMS the rose  
Its music fills the world  
And in your own face there's a flower  
While in the garden of your bed  
Blossoms the rose.

*Tek: Awat hansāla pīdha de de*

*Adar badāyiga*

*Apne jorila kate supāri de de*

*Bānjla de de wo bālaka.*

*Ad: Māmāna ghokai bhaiya dilama wīchārai*  
*Ghoki ghoki ke chola rowai ga.*

GIVE a seat to your visitor  
 So will you be honoured  
 Give prepared supari to your own mate  
 Pray that a barren woman may have a child  
 O brother, I have thought and thought  
 I have asked my heart  
 By this anxious thought my life has wept.

## THE LAHAKI KARMA

This is another very popular type of song. It is sung, as the Lahaki Karma is danced, with great vigour and speed, while the feet move in intricate rhythm. The Gond say that once they are caught by the Lahaki, they are lost to the world, and all its troubles are forgotten.

*Rāg: Ohoho ooo re o.*

*Tek: Talawa ma jāl phekai māre machhuri  
Nahiga nahi sanghi kaise milau najuria.*

*Ad: Kon kahāy mār mār kon kahāy jhai mār  
Kon kahāy gharale nikār.*

I THREW the net into the lake to kill the fish  
O friend, how can I meet her eyes?  
One says, Kill, kill. Another says, Do not kill  
Some say, Turn her out of the house.

11



*Tek: Jhingurjāke boliya sun lebe  
Dekhema jhingara ghine ghināpan boliyānama  
Tor bara suhāpan boliyānama.*

*Ad: Kon mahina bolai pāpire pihuwa kone mahina  
Jhingurja hānāwai kon mahina.*

HARK to the song of the grasshopper.  
How ugly to look at  
How sweet to hear.

In which month sings the bird of sin?  
In which month sings the grasshopper?

#### THE PANKANI KARMA

The Pankani Karma is not a different dance but is the name of the tune. The music, which unfortunately has not been recorded, is very Hindu in character as are the references in the song itself which are all to Krishna. The Panka, who now form a semi-Hindu caste, are probably aboriginal in origin. They are very intelligent and have adopted the Gond songs and dances with enthusiasm. Their interpretations of the Karma and Dadaria are often of great beauty and might well have a book to themselves.

*Rāg: Ahāho o re e e.*

*Tek: Banasi bajānālāre chhode debe māya  
Nande mohanjike lāla hāy re.*

*Ad: Teri banasi rasake bhini bājī madhur rasāl  
Sunsun sārī brijke nārī bhul gaye gharmāl.*

RUBY of Nande Mohan  
Stop playing on your flute.

For the sweet rasa of its music  
Sinks into the very soul of love  
When the women of Brij hear it  
They forgot their homes.

#### THE BAIGANI KARMA

The Baigani Karma dance may take the form of either the Baigani Dawad or the Baigani Jhumar which we have already described. The name Baigani is also given to the great circular dance where often two concentric rings of dancers revolve in opposite directions. The songs and tunes that follow are used in this dance.

*Dukh sahi nahi jāy  
Ye dāi bāpana ke mai nohar re.  
Khāndeke dhotiya mudhe ma dharehu  
Ohi laike jāhu sasura ghere.*

I CANNOT bear this sorrow  
 I am the very life of my mother and father  
 The cloth that used to be over my shoulder  
 It is over my head now  
 That is what I will take to my husband's house..

A girl is going to her husband's house for the first time :  
 she will take him her maturing youth symbolized in the cloth  
 flung over her head.

14



*Ho-o-o hāy.*  
 Patareli hai jamān dekhania lāgai suhāpan re  
 Das rupaiyāke bindiya  
 Sādesāt kē hawāl  
 Pāch rupaiyāke sakuri  
 Hāy sakuri to chumai gāl  
 Dekhani ma lāgai suhāpan re.

SHE is graceful  
 My young darling  
 It is delight  
 To look at her  
 She has a bindiya worth ten rupees  
 Her hawal is seven eight  
 The chains are five rupees  
 The chains kiss her cheeks  
 What delight it is to see her !

The bindiya is a beautiful silver ornament tied across the head. The hawal is a necklace made by stringing rupees on a decorative cord.

## JHUMKI KARMA

This form of the dance appears to have been borrowed from the wandering Dewar or the Badi. One or two women balance baskets on their heads and gaily decorate themselves with bells on their feet. A pair of male drummers accompany them. The dance has now been imitated by some of the Pardhan who regard it as a very special achievement. The following illustrates the form and type of the songs that are used.

15

*Rāg: Aha ā ā ā ā āha.*

*Tek: Ehe tola mohe dāregā  
Ghungaru balam tola mohi dāre re.*

*Ad: Apan khawai dālbhāt tola detay pasia.*

ALAS she has entranced you  
With the bells on her ankles  
She has entranced you.

Yet for herself she has boiled rice and pulse  
And only gives you rice-water.

## THE BAIGANI JHUMAR KARMA

16

*Achha dādure champa dār akhāda chholaw  
Achha dādure chhote chhokara bulāw*

*Achha dādure chhote chhote mānduri mangāw  
Achha dādure chhote chhote chhokari bulāw.*

My dear little brother, make ready the dancing-ground  
My dear little brother, call some nice young boys  
My dear little brother, bring some nice little drums  
My dear little brother, call some nice little girls.

17

*Rāg: Oho ooo hā ā ā y.*

*Tek: Bar kāte pipal kāte āma kahe kāte  
Gauka pīdāla mudama lāde  
Dharam kahe dāre  
Aise bhanej kāhe māre.*

*Ad: Jān to kahāy gaon kaise  
Khau to kahāy dāl bhāt  
Karam karawat ho gais  
Khichari ma pad gay hāt.*

You have cut a banyan  
You have cut a pipal  
But why did you cut the mango tree?  
It is as if you were carrying  
A cow's leg upon your head  
Why have you cast away your virtue?  
Why have you killed your nephew?

He said he would go to a village  
He said he would eat rice and pulse  
But fortune turned its back on him  
And all his hand grasped was khichri.

## BAIGANI DAWAD KARMA

18

*Tek: Anganāma tehi māre anganāma tehi māre  
Bhaisi charat sing jor.*

*Ad: Kon ban ahira gaiyāla charāye ga  
Kon ban paniya piyaye.*

He was calling in the yard  
The buffaloes graze with horns together

In which jungle did the Ahir feed the cows?  
In which jungle did he water them?

## THE BADIANI KARMA

The songs are usually sung with the head on one side.  
The style and music are borrowed from the wandering Badi.

19

*Rāg: Jehāy.*

*Tek: Nahi dikhay gāoke jawayya ga  
Phikar karai mor ghar ke rahayya.*

*Ad: Kekhar hāth likh chitthi bhejo swāmi  
Kekhar hāth sandesha re?*

I CANNOT see anyone who is going to my village  
How anxious my people at home must be.

O master, by whose hand should I write and send the letter?  
By whose hand should I send a message?

20



*Rāg: O ho ho re hāy.*

*Tek: Irphir ke chāra charle warag ke suwana ga  
Baithela khojai hariyar birachha re.*

*Ad: Bangat ma dāi hotāy bangat ma bhāi  
Bighade ma koi nahi puchhai.*

WANDER as you will  
Eat your food in freedom  
The parrot seeks a green tree for its perch.

In good fortune your mother stands by you  
In good fortune your brother stands by you  
But in disaster no one asks for you.

## THE JHARPAT KARMA

21

*Rāg: Oho Oooo hāre hai.*

*Tek: Bichhal gayo madalāke kāndo  
Bichhal gayo.*

*Ad: Na mola khāye jāy na mola pi jāy  
Ghok parai kachhu na suhay.*

I HAVE slipped in the mud of Mandla  
I have slipped in the mud.

I cannot eat, I cannot drink  
The memory (of Mandla) comes  
And nothing else contents me.

The onomatopæic cries and exclamations that occur rather frequently in these songs are an important element of their technique. The use of echo-words, of internal rhyme, of vigorous and expressive bits of verbal music, makes the songs go: it gives them life and energy, and the noise of the words blends with the roar of the drums and the stamping feet.

The use of such expressions was common in Elizabethan England, and more recently has ranged from the semi-humorous—such as Browning's 'Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, tootle-te-tootle the fife' and Lear's 'He tinkledy-binkledy-winkled a bell' to serious attempts to express sound such as T. S. Eliot's borrowing with amazing success of the 'prick-song' of the 'ravished nightingale' from *Lyly*.

Yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
'Jug jug' to dirty ears.

*Lyly's* full account of the nightingale's song was 'jug jug jug jug teru'. *Brathwaite* gives it as 'jug jug' and 'te'u te'u'. But *Middleton*, for some reason, makes the same bird cry 'twit twit twit', which is hardly credible.

The cries and calls of birds are naturally those most commonly attempted by the poets. *Shakespeare* makes the lark chant 'tirra lirra' and the strutting chanticleer cry 'cock-a-diddle dow'. The Elizabethan owl usually hooted 'te-whit

te-whoo' or 'tu-whit to-who', a tradition maintained by Coleridge, whose owl in *Christabel* cried 'tu-whoo ! tu-whoo !' Thomas Nashe attempts 'cuckoo, jug-jug, pee-we, to-wittawoo' for a symphony of birds. W. H. Auden speaks of a 'murmuration of starlings'.

- In India, the Uraon describe the song of the koel-cuckoo as 'kuhu kuhu': in our collection it is given as 'kuhu-kuhu' and 'kahar-kahar'. The Vedda reproduce the song of the dove as 'kudurun kudurun' and the twitter of birds as 'silibili silibili'. The Uraon represent the murmur of bees as

Nanjani, manjani  
Ranjani, manjani.

The Pardhan horse neighs 'hiyo hiyo' or 'hu hu', and trots 'hin hin hin hin.'

Drums and music are everywhere the same. Elizabethan Fletcher makes his trumpets sound 'tara tara tara tara tara' and his drums go 'dub dub'. Hirakhan's 'drum of victory' sounded 'dum dum'. The heroes of our songs tremble 'dal dal' or 'tar tar'; the heroines weep 'dhar dhar' and sob 'kalhar kalhar'. They laugh 'gad gad' and an old woman chuckles 'khad khad'.

A sound of great importance to the Gond and Pardhan singer is the musical tinkle of a girl's ornaments, a theme rarely celebrated in European poetry. But here the chutki toe-rings sound 'chutuk chutuk', the anklets go 'chunur chunur' or 'runjum runjum'—and when a youth hears the sweet music, his heart beats 'kudur budur'.

Other sounds that are attempted in these songs are—the splashing of water, 'lijak lijar'; rain falling, 'rimik jhimik' or 'rinjhim rinjhim'; a stream rippling, 'jhir jhir'. The noise of the churn is 'ghamar ghamar', of kneading 'gadar gadar', of cooking 'karak karak', of boiling clothes 'radbad radbad'. The beat of the large rice-husker worked by the feet is well represented as 'dhok dhik dhok dhik'. A litter comes creaking and swinging 'diggi dola' and 'dip dip'.

Unfortunately, there is little comparative material available in the existing monographs. But the 'echo-words' common in every Indian language serve a similar purpose of giving life and energy to the verse. Large, exciting, double words are also used as in other languages: Gurdon points out the Khasi habit of using such words 'which add much to the finish

and polish of a sentence'.<sup>1</sup> Some of these appear to be attempts at the expression of sound; thus 'ia shoh ia dat' means 'to scuffle'; 'rymbiaw rymboin' represents the adverb 'shrinkingly' and 'nior-nior' means 'shakily'. The Khasi 'sip-sip, sap-sap' for 'tasteless' may be compared with the Chhattisgarhi 'lichar pichar' or 'insipid'.

<sup>1</sup> P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (London, 1914), 215.

## **RINA AND SUA SONGS**

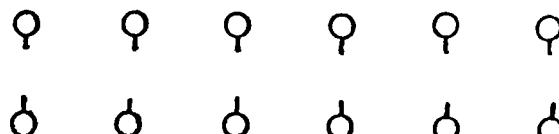


## THE DANCES

THE Rina, Sua and Tapadi are dances for women and the Rina at least may once have been a ceremonial and patriotic performance before the Rani in the courts of the old Gond kings. Today the Rina is danced at Diwali, and the Sua and the Tapadi (which is the Baiga version) during the cold weather from November to January. There are no very strict rules, however, and the Rina may also be danced at marriages. These dances are specially popular among married and old women, and members of the Hindu cultivating castes join freely with the aborigines in performing them.

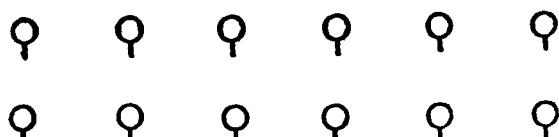
Like the Saila, the Rina is often danced competitively against the women of another village. The challenging party arrives in the evening to give the other women time to prepare. After dark they try to turn over the logs of wood placed as weights on the roofs of their hosts' houses. If they succeed in doing this unnoticed, they believe they will win the contest. If they are discovered, their hosts offer fire and incense at a cross-roads the next morning to undo the charm.

The general form of each of these dances is the same and is very simple. The women form themselves into two rows facing each other, but not holding hands.

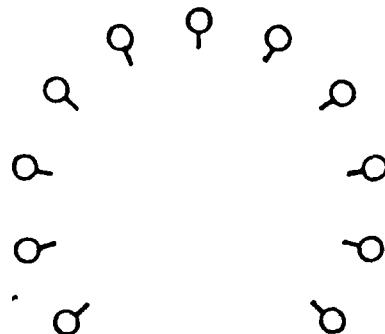


For the Rina and Tapadi dances, the rows bend forward alternately clapping their hands and moving their feet very gradually with a simple left-right left-right movement so that the double line slowly rotates on its own axis.

After a time one line turns its back on the other, and the women of both go down on their knees and clap their hands vigorously, swaying to and fro.



Finally, both lines join together and go round in a big circle, all facing inwards, bending down and clapping their hands.



The Sua dance differs only in its more exact imitations of the movements of a parrot. The women move both feet together, very slightly, sliding them along the ground, raising the toes a little first and then the heels. They swing their buttocks slightly and move their heads to and fro as a parrot does. At the end of each line of the song, they utter a shrill parrot-like cry. The best dancers use their hands to great advantage, clapping them together very low down and bringing them up and towards the breast, opening them rather wide.

## 22

*Ri-rina rina rihālo rina  
Chutuk chutuk chutki bajai' pairin ko tāra  
Dhiro dhiro wah do jābo bajār.*

THE toe-rings sound *chutuk chutuk* in tune with the anklets

Let us go slowly slowly to the bazaar.

*Ri-rina rihilo rina ri-rina-rina ki-i-i-i*

*Rihālo rina*

*Kon desale āyere jogi*

*Kon des tay jā-ā-ā-be jogi re*

*Ki-i-i-i-i*

*Agum desale āye pachhum des jā-ā-ā-be jogi re.*

FROM what country do you come, O Jogi?

To what country are you going?

You have come from the country in front

You are going to the country behind, O Jogi.



Sua nāchai jāwo ki sua nāche  
 Jāwore suana bhāi sua nāche jawo tinojan  
 Suana sua nāche jāwo tinojan  
 Asman lāgai gādimā chadh jatau  
 Suana kotāke māya dharke.

LET us go to dance the Parrot Dance  
 O brother, let us three go to dance  
 To dance the Parrot Dance, the three of us  
 O how I long to get in the train  
 And go to Kota for the Parrot Dance.

The parrot is famous in Indian folklore as a bird of learning, a go-between of lovers and a sex symbol. The parrot does in fact have a larger brain than other birds and its thick tongue enjoys a finer sense of taste. There is a learned parrot in the *Katha Sarit Sagara*;<sup>1</sup> another called Vaisampayana in Bana's *Kadambari*. In the *Katha Sarit Sagara* again we find a continent King of the Parrots named Hemaprabha, rich in the chastity it had practised in a former birth. It helps the foolish parrot Charumati, enslaved by its passions, to renounce the society of females.<sup>2</sup> King Vikramakesarin had a parrot of god-like intellect named Vidagdhachudamani. It knew all the Shastras and ever assisted him by its discernment.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Vishnu Purana* the wife of the sage Kasyapa was the mother of all parrots. In a story recorded by Steel and Temple a parrot is the companion and helper of the hero and assists the heroine.<sup>4</sup>

Although in the Central Provinces the parrot is the go-between of lovers,<sup>5</sup> the classical view of this bird is that

<sup>1</sup> Penzer, v, 27 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, vi, 86.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vi, 183 ff.

<sup>4</sup> F. A. Steel and R. C. Temple, *Wide-Awake Stories* (Bombay, 1884), 255 ff.

<sup>5</sup> As in the story of Dhola—H. L. Kavyopadhyaya, *A Grammar of the Chhattisgarhi Dialect* (Calcutta, 1921), 198 ff.—and in many of our poems.

it has the lowest opinion of women. King Vikramakesarin's parrot, for example, declares that 'females are of intolerable audacity, immoral and wicked' and the talking parrot is often represented as warning the deceived husband. Even in the story of Dhola, where the parrot proves itself so useful a go-between, the heroine while admitting its intelligence deplores its infidelity.

Crooke says that the bird seems to have been a sort of marriage totem among certain tribes : images of it made of the wood of the cotton tree or of clay were hung up in the marriage-shed by the Kol and others.<sup>1</sup> In our poems, as well as in W. G. Archer's collections, the parrot is often associated with sex and marriage ; it is used both as a male and a female symbol.

Padumavati, the daughter of King Gandharva Sen of Ceylon, had a parrot called Hiramani which could understand the speech of human beings. It escaped and was caught by a fowler who sold it to Raja Ratan Sen of Chitore. When the parrot described Padumavati's beauty to its master, he renounced the throne and went on foot with the parrot to Ceylon. When he reached there he sent the parrot as his messenger and at last married the princess. This story, which is told in a sixteenth century Hindi poem by Malik Muhammad Jaisi, is illustrated by the delightful picture of the Jaipur School, showing the princess catching the bird, which is reproduced in Gangoly's *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*.

<sup>1</sup> Crooke, ii, 252. For an excellent story about a parrot, see *North Indian Notes and Queries*, v, 31.

## RINA SONGS

24

*Ririna rina rihila rina ! He nāre suwāho !*  
The dancers are dancing, the people gather round O  
How lovely are the feet adorned with silver  
How beautiful the anklets with their sounding rings  
The dancers are dancing, the people gather round O  
*Ririna rihila ay.*

25

O SLEEPER rise, if you would see  
At midnight the fig burst into flower  
The feet adorned with rings are beautiful  
Look at her throat, the necklace circling it  
The anklets made the ankles beautiful  
From the toes I will remove the rings  
How shall I know if our thoughts agree, O friend ?  
O sleeper rise, if you would see  
At midnight the fig burst into flower.

26

*Toni wo sua ki ri rina rihil ai*  
Speak to me, parrot, on the little fig tree  
For this is the home of parrots like you  
On the slippery stones in the river  
The girls are washing their clothes  
And laughing *gad gad*  
For they are preparing for tomorrow's festival  
They have brought out their gold ornaments  
Their silver necklaces  
They have called their friends from all around  
The koel has cried *kahar kahar*  
Perhaps her sweet singing has brought the festival.

Compare the Kol Karma song—

Slowly fall the figs from the tree  
 But when the parrot  
 Sits on the branch  
 They come down in showers.<sup>1</sup>

27

*Ri rina wo rina ri ri nāwo rina*  
 Life of my mind, where have you gone to fight?  
 I change my rings from toe to toe  
*Khelo khelo khelo*  
 But my bed is lonely  
*Jhelo jhelo jhelo*  
 Life of my mind, where have you gone?  
 I said, Don't go, but you would go  
*Khelo khelo khelo*  
 I change my anklets from foot to foot  
*Jhelo jhelo jhelo*  
 And change them back again  
 But my bed is lonely  
*Khelo khelo khelo*  
*Jhelo jhelo jhelo.*

28

*Ri rina rina wo wah rihal rina*  
 Kagdi, walk slowly slowly  
 Slide your feet slowly along  
 In the country where there is no famine of scorpion-rings  
 Kagdi, walk slowly slowly  
 In the country where there is no famine of armlets.  
 As she walks she thinks with fear  
 As I went they said, You are running away  
 But leave us a message as you go to a stranger's land  
 Kagdi, there's still some red maize in your bin  
 Kagdi, walk slowly slowly  
 In the country where there is no famine of necklaces.

Scorpion-rings are the silver or metal rings worn on the toes and bearing a crude representation of a scorpion. There is possibly a vague idea that they will protect against scorpion-bite.

<sup>1</sup> Original at p. 130 of *North Indian Notes and Queries*, 11 (1892).

WILL you have a cloth or a blanket?  
 Will you be a Brahmin or Chamar?  
 O fair Laharo, in the bun of your dark hair  
 The peacock cries  
 Will you eat hot or cold supper?  
 Will you go to Calcutta or Kasi?  
 O fair Laharo, in the bun of your dark hair  
 The peacock cries.

Laharo is a name given to a friendly, forward, exciting girl. The *bun of hair*, projecting at the back of the head and tied with *gay colours*; is regarded as most beautiful and attractive.

The peacock has not a very good reputation in Europe, for its cry is supposed to be a warning of death, and it is usually associated with the deadly sin of pride. For example, in Middle English literature the priest may be described as 'proud as a peacock' or a lover may be 'as any peacock proud and gay'. But in our songs the peacock is a living picture of colour, beauty and movement. It is the bright plumage and the dancing that is remembered. Even the fishing float made from its feathers is supposed to be so attractive to the fish that the word is used as symbol for a lover.

In traditional Indian mythology the peacock is represented as suffering from the heat and delighted with the first drops of rain. The peacock is supposed to watch the lightning flashing in the clouds which prophesy that its sorrow will soon be at an end. Its feathers get ruffled if it is taken near poison. Used in magic the feathers are a potent demon-scarer. The aborigines also use peacock feathers as symbols of the gods, as personal decoration and often carry bunches of them during their dances. The peacock, therefore, is an apt symbol for expressing the delight and vitality of a man's beloved.

## SUA SONGS

30

I HAVE put on the measured bangles, parrot  
But I do not see my sweet young dewar.

The bangles were brought all the way from Jubbulpore, parrot  
But I do not see my little dewar.

My comb fits into my hair  
But I do not see my young dewar.

On my arms are the tightly-fitting armlets  
But my hard-hearted dewar does not come.

The armlets were made in Bilaspur  
But I do not see my young dewar.

My nose-ring is fitted to my nose  
But what has happened to my darling dewar ?

The dewar or husband's younger brother stands in a relation of special intimacy and freedom to a Gond wife.

31

THE dweller on the hill, parrot  
Is sitting on the mango branch  
Take a message, parrot  
Take a message to my mother in her country  
Give father Ram-ramoa  
Say Johar to mother  
Your daughter is away in a foreign land  
Do not weep for her, mother  
But the parrot flew away  
And sat on a tamarind branch.

'Ram-ramoa' is the modern form of greeting ; 'Johar' is more old-fashioned, but still common among the wilder tribesmen, specially in Bastar.

32

MOTHER-IN-LAW told me to clean the pulse, parrot  
But nanand gave me the half-prepared kodai.

Grind it, bhauji, grind it as if it were wheat-flour.

As I was grinding it, my shoulders lost their strength, parrot  
And I broke my necklace of nine hundred rupees.

The burning nanand heard it, parrot

And whispered to her mother  
I said to my mother, O mother,  
Your daughter-in-law has broken the necklace.

This does not concern me daughter

Your father will settle this.

I said to my father, O father

Your daughter-in-law has broken the necklace.

This does not concern me, daughter

Let your brother settle this.

I said to my brother, O brother

Your wife has broken the necklace.

Little girl, do not talk scandal

For one day you too will have to go  
To the house of your father-in-law.

It was the neighbour's child, parrot

That broke the necklace

It was the child that broke it, parrot.

Nanand is the husband's younger sister. Bhauji is how a girl would address her husband's wife. Usually the relations between the two are very friendly : the situation in this poem is exceptional.

## 33

O PLAYFUL maina, don't go to that village  
She shouldn't go there, should she, parrot ?  
The Raja's son there is too free a lover.

Don't flirt with me, boy, I'll tell my father.

I'll make your father drunk, parrot  
And carry you away  
She shouldn't go there, should she, parrot ?

The maina bears a family resemblance to the European starling. 'No bird', says Eha, 'is a more characteristic feature of Indian life than the maina. It is everywhere, in town or

village, field or garden, sometimes walking after cattle and catching the grasshoppers they startle, sometimes patrolling a field on its own account, nodding its head at every step. It is always among the scarlet flowers of the Coral Tree when they are in bloom. Mainas are eminently sociable. They go in pairs, or small parties, talking a great deal. They sleep in company like crows, and jabber incredibly while getting to bed.' The suitability of the bird as a woman-symbol needs no emphasizing.

## 34

PUT a basket on your head  
 Under your arm a bag  
 Come, let's go to Karanjia bazaar  
 In Karanjia bazaar what is there for sale?  
 Red spinach and garlic leaves  
 Ah, don't forget the red spinach  
 With old men the bazaar is crowded  
 For a pice you can get  
 A pair of old dears  
 And a boy thrown in for luck.

## 35

FOR twelve years I worshipped Siva, and what is my reward?  
 I have got a hunchback husband for my piety  
 If my hunchback comes while I am straining rice  
 He goes all over the house to find me the strainer  
 If he comes in when I am making the bed  
 He goes about to find the ghursi  
 But I'd like to get in an engine-cart  
 And go back to my mother's house.

You may return to your own country, girl  
 You may marry another man  
 But he won't be as good as me.

You may turn out a dark girl  
 You may turn out a fair girl  
 But you won't get another blue sambhar like me.

In our town there is a Raja  
 The great Bir Singh Raja  
 Who's a hunchback just like me.

The *ghursi* is the village warming-pan, an earthen bowl which is filled with smouldering scraps of cow-dung and placed under the bed at night. The warmth it gives, together with the stuffy atmosphere, makes up for the lack of mattress and bedding.

36

FROM West to East the *Jogi* has come, parrot  
And is sitting on the threshold  
Take rice and pulse, *Jogi*  
But go away from our door  
May there be in your house  
Full store of rice and pulse  
But I am not going from your door  
Take your rice and pulse back again  
Give me a lucky cow, O parrot.

37

O MOTHER, your daughter-in-law is a great wanton  
She is sure to be out in the goldsmith's shop.

What business has she in the goldsmith's shop ?  
We can get some ear-rings at home.

O mother, your daughter-in-law is a great wanton  
She is sure to be out in the *Koshta*'s shop.

What business has she in the *Koshta*'s shop ?  
We can get cloth for her at home.

O mother your daughter-in-law is a great wanton  
She is sure to be out in the *Teli*'s shop.

What business has she in the *Teli*'s shop ?  
We can get her oil at home.

*Rangāreli*, the word we have translated 'wanton', means highly-coloured, adventurous, flirtatious, a domestic tart.

38

MOON and Sun, I fall at your feet  
Give me not birth as a girl again  
From birth we wretched women are orphans  
Mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law

Are always abusing us  
 By their continual nagging we are burnt  
 So I ran away to the forest  
 But the treacherous river stopped me.  
 I said to the Dhimar, O Dhimar  
 Dhimar my brother, take me across.  
 Little girl, stay here for a day  
 Tomorrow I'll take you over.  
 But during the day I'll die of hunger  
 In the night I'll perish of cold.  
 In the daytime I'll feed you with a basket of fish  
 At night I'll spread my net over your young body.

The most common theme of the Sua songs and ballads is the unhappy lot of a girl under the rule of parents-in-law in her husband's house. The Dhimar is a fisherman, one of whose duties during the rains is to escort wayfarers across the flooded rivers.

## 39

Go, parrot, to the forest of joy and sandal  
 Go and bring nine bunches of mangoes.  
 At your desire I will go for the mangoes  
 But in whose hands shall I give them ?  
 Raja Bikram is sitting on his throne  
 Put them in his turban.  
 But I do not know him, sister  
 How shall I put them in his turban ?  
 His body is slender, but his face is full  
 And he has a thin moustache.

## 40

THERE is a parrot's wing among the crows  
 Your darkened eyes of love pursue me  
 My bird.

## 41

IN my father's garden  
 The parrot sits among the trees  
 And picks the leaves

Now try with bread in your hand  
To tempt the parrot to come down.

Come down, come down, O parrot  
Though you belong to others.

Sit in my lap and feed  
O parrot, among the trees  
In my father's garden.

42

PARROT, come to the woods of delight  
Come to the woods of sandal  
Bring a bunch of mango flowers  
How shall I go?  
How shall I fly?  
How shall I bring the mango flowers?  
Go on your heels  
Fly with your wings  
Carry the flowers in your beak  
Parrot, come to the woods of delight  
Come to the forest of sandal.

43

DIGGING with my finger, parrot  
I sowed the kundru seed  
Laden low with fruit, parrot  
The shrub bent down to earth  
Mother-in-law, give me the golden basket  
I'm going to pick the kundru.  
For whom will you cook potato and brinjal?  
For whom will you curry the kundru?  
For my lover I'll cook the potato and brinjal  
For my hunchback I'll curry the kundru, parrot  
Laughing I'll give it to my lover  
Weeping I'll give it to my hunchback, parrot  
I'd like to run off in an engine-train  
But the love of my hunchback keeps me here, parrot.

SEVEN queens had Raja Daserath, six had children, one was barren  
 In the house they called her barren, in the town they called her barren  
 Everyone called her barren and she was much ashamed  
 She used to stay inside the house and never went abroad  
 When the cock crew, a bird called and she went to bathe  
 With rice well washed and leaves of bel she worshipped Mahadeo.

Why have you come? What work of yours has failed?  
 How many kos was his disc? Of his hair there was no measure.

For a son am I come, Mahadeo, for a son I have come on foot.  
 Bring a bison's milk and wash my hair and drink it  
 I will give you Hanuman for son and he will rule over Lanka.

WHO is going to Rai Ratanpur and who is going to Drug?  
 My brother is going to Rai Ratanpur, my husband's going to Drug.

Who will bring you anklets to adorn your heels?  
 Who will bring a co-wife to live in your house?  
 Brother will bring anklets to adorn my heels  
 Husband will bring a co-wife to live in my house.

How will I go with the anklets round my heels?  
 How will I go with a co-wife in the house?  
 Laughing I will go with anklets round my heels  
 Crying I will go with a co-wife in the house.

What will I do with the anklets round my heels?  
 What will I do with the co-wife in my house?  
 I'll change the anklets for others, parrot  
 I'll throw the co-wife in the fire, parrot.

SEVEN brothers had seven dogs, the seven went to hunt  
 Which brother carried the crooked gun, which brother carried the sword?

Big brother carried the crooked gun, little brother carried the sword

Which brother killed the deer, which brother killed the bison ?  
But by mistake for a deer they killed their sister's husband  
Why, brothers, did you kill her husband and make your sister  
a widow ?

Beneath what tree did you kill him and where did you put the  
corpse ?

We killed him under the sandal, we put his corpse under a  
kadam

Who drank the blood of the body, who ate the flesh ?

Earth drank the blood of the body, the vultures ate the flesh  
For whom will you bring bangles and anklets, for whom will  
you watch the road ?

For whom will you bring ten villages, for whom will you cook  
a feast ?

Light a fire, little girl, to prepare your feast, he will hardly  
come by the road

For whom shall I make ready the bed, for whom shall I stitch  
the leaf-plates ?

Your bed will be burnt, little girl, your leaf-plates be thrown  
in the fire.

Compare the Uraon poem<sup>1</sup>—

Uncle and nephew  
Like two wild geese  
Uncle, O come, my uncle  
And hunt in the jungle  
Hearing a stag  
I shot an arrow  
Girl  
It struck  
My brother.

I WENT to beg for fire, parrot, as I was grinding in the stable  
The clothes were boiling *radbad radbad*, the Raja's son was  
sitting by  
The Dhobi's daughter, parrot, took the clothes and the Prince  
prepared his horse

<sup>1</sup> Archer, op. cit., p. 69.

She left the women's ghat, the men's ghat, and went where  
 the Dhobi washed the clothes  
 While the Dhobi's daughter, parrot, washed the clothes, the  
 Raja's son sat near.  
 Move move away, O Prince, or the ashy drops will splash you.  
 There are ashy drops for you, but for me is scented oil  
 O girl, leave this Dhobi's work and desert your Dhobi husband.  
 I cannot leave my Dhobi's work or desert my Dhobi husband.  
 Come, come, O Dhobi's daughter, come to my coloured palace,  
 Come, Dhobi's daughter, I'll give you Bengal *pān* to eat.  
 May fire burn your coloured palace  
 May your Bengal *pān* turn poison  
 I will not leave my Dhobi work, I will not desert my husband.

## 48

MOTHER-IN-LAW, my brother has come to take me home.  
 I don't know what to say, your father-in-law will know.  
 What grain should I use for his dinner, what curry should  
 I prepare?  
 Take dirty kodai for his dinner, give him curry of gumi-  
 bhaji.  
 My brother takes milk for his dinner  
 He washes his hands in buttermilk  
 How can he eat gumi-bhaji?  
 She made him a dish of mokaiya grain, parrot  
 She cooked urid and mung pulse.  
 What pot should I use for his water?  
 What dish should I use for his food?  
 Give him water, my daughter-in-law, in the metal pot  
 Give him dinner in a brass dish.  
 Weeping she says to her brother, parrot  
 Come my brother and eat  
 She gives him water in a pot of flowers  
 His food in a dish of gold.  
 She rises from sleep and says to her mother-in-law, parrot  
 Mother-in-law hear my word, shall I go or not?  
 My brother has come to fetch me home.

I don't know what to say, your jethani will know  
 She says to her nanand, parrot  
 My brother has come to fetch me home  
 Tell me, shall I go or no?

I don't know what to say, your nanand will know  
 She says to her nanand, parrot  
 My brother has come to fetch me home  
 Tell me, shall I go or no?

Clean the cow-dung from twelve stables  
 Bring twelve pots of water from the well  
 Husk twelve measures of rice  
 Then you may go to your mother's country  
 So said the nanand, parrot.

The brother sat on his horse, parrot, the girl followed behind  
 They went one kos, they went three kos  
 At last the girl reached her mother's country, parrot.

## 49

To which hamlet has the Jogi come, bhauji?  
 Where has he made his camp?

He has come to the Dhimar's hamlet, bhauji  
 O how I long to see him  
*Tari O nāna O de mor nāna re sua tari nāwawa nāna*  
 From the swing the girl comes down  
 Let us go to bathe in the lake  
 From the curtain the maid comes out  
 Take warm water with you  
 I will go away away with the Jogi  
 Take my cloth from the basket  
 Comb my hair, put on my ornaments  
 Don't tell my father and mother or they'll kill me  
 The Jogi has come to the courtyard  
 The maid has come out of the house  
 O with this Jogi I will run away  
 Good-bye, good-bye, my parrot  
 If I live, I will come to see you  
 If I die, it is the same sorrow throughout the world  
 The Jogi went ahead, the maid behind, parrot  
 He is going to his country, parrot, the maid goes behind him  
 He's gone one kos, he's gone two kos

He soon will reach his country, parrot  
He is pitching his tent by the lakeside, parrot.

A Jogi often symbolizes a lover in the songs. The term is not altogether complimentary, for it implies that a man's love is as unsettled and transitory as a wandering mendicant. But it may also mean that a man has become restless as a Jogi because he cannot win his love. A kos is generally considered to be two miles. It is 'the distance between a pipe and one's desire for another', or 'the time it takes for a plucked leaf to curl at the edges'.

## THE STORY OF RAMULA

A SUA BALLAD

THE cock crows, dawn is breaking, parrot.  
Get up, daughter-in-law, get up and sweep the courtyard.

How can I get up to sweep the courtyard, parrot?  
The child in my lap will weep.

Get up, daughter-in-law, and churn the curds.  
Do you hear him, parrot? And go to sell the buttermilk.

I don't know how to churn the curds, parrot,  
Or how to take the buttermilk for sale.

Swing your hips, make your shoulders flash to and fro  
And take the buttermilk to Muttranagar to sell it.

I can't do that, father-in-law—  
Don't you see, parrot? The child in my lap is crying.

Give the child in your lap soft laddu sweets  
And swing him in the cradle;  
We have a servant kept on food wages;  
Take him with you carrying a kawar.<sup>1</sup>

But the servant has no kawar,  
O brother parrot, he has no kawar.

Come, come, didi,<sup>2</sup> I have put the buttermilk in the pot.  
Let us go, parrot, to sell it in Hardinagar.

As Ramula was lifting up the pot, the boy sneezed  
And the omen cut the way.  
Wasn't it an omen, parrot, to cut the way?  
Ramula thought, O parrot, the boy has sneezed and cut the  
way,  
I won't go to sell the buttermilk.

No didi come. The morning advances. It was no omen, but  
as the house was swept  
Some chilli went into his nose to make him sneeze, parrot.

<sup>1</sup> A kawar is carried over the shoulders and consists of a pole from either end of which hangs an arrangement of cords (sikka) in which loads can be placed.

<sup>2</sup> Elder sister.

As Ramula leaves the house a snake crosses the way.  
 Don't you see, parrot, a snake has cut the way?  
 Ramula thought, Wasn't it an omen to cut the way?  
 I won't go to sell the buttermilk.

No didi come. It's getting late. And everyone has a belly.  
 And a mouth chasing her.  
 The poor snake was only going to get its food, parrot.

When Ramula reached the boundary  
 O parrot, a jackal cut the path.  
 Ramula stood pondering in her mind.  
 O parrot, the pearly tears fell to the ground.  
 Your brother will abuse me.  
 The child in my lap will be crying, parrot,  
 I won't go to sell the buttermilk.

No didi come. Hardinagar is near, parrot;  
 Let us sell our buttermilk and soon return home.

Ramula walked one kos, she walked two kos.  
 O parrot, the soles of her feet were scorched;  
 The tears fell at every step.  
 Don't you see, parrot? Ramula was going to sell her buttermilk.

Ramula reached the Geru River  
 The river was flowing deep, parrot.  
 O Geru River, take me to the other side  
 The water stood up like walls on either side.  
 O parrot, Ramula crossed on dry ground.

After crossing the river, O parrot  
 There were no trees, parrot, there was no village to be seen.  
 Boy, shall I throw the buttermilk into the river?

O bhauji,<sup>1</sup> let us have our bhanwar<sup>2</sup> here.

Ramula stood below the sandal tree and thought,  
 O boy, till today you called me didi  
 But today you call me bhauji.

<sup>1</sup> Bhauji, elder sister-in-law, a term of as great familiarity as didi is of respect. Its use implies that the youth expected intimate relations and even marriage.

<sup>2</sup> Bhanwar, the technical term for the most important part of the marriage ceremony when bride and groom go round the sacred pole together.

O girl, the boy you kept for food-wages,  
 Give him a gift for his services.  
 Today I have got you at last.  
 If our bhanwar is not done today  
 I will cut your throat and lay your head on the ground.  
 Go boy go to the village and bring an axe and spade  
 So we can have a little hut nearby.  
 When you have built it, you'll have to work twelve years more  
 Then I'll do the bhanwar with you.

O parrot, he has gone to the village for an axe and spade.  
 Ramula picked up the pot  
 And threw the buttermilk into the river;  
 The river flowed with buttermilk, parrot,  
 Flowed down to where her husband was grazing the buffaloes.  
 How comes buttermilk of my own buffaloes  
 Flowing down the river, parrot?  
 As the buffaloes heard him they struck their heads on the  
 ground and wept.  
 The she-buffaloes said to their lords and children, Come  
 Our little Ramula is in trouble.

The buffaloes walked eight days and nine nights, parrot  
 But yet they did not reach Ramula,  
 But as the shadow of the tenth day drew nigh  
 The buffaloes found little Ramula, parrot.

When Ramula saw her buffaloes, she cried aloud and wept.  
 Her tears were big as pearls, parrot.  
 They cried, O daughter what has befallen you  
 That you should throw the buttermilk into the river?

The boy we kept for food-wages  
 That same fellow has asked me to marry him.

The buffaloes said—Did you hear them, parrot?—  
 O daughter, the Rawat boy, your Raja, is approaching.

Who hurt you, Rani, who drove you from the house?  
 My father-in-law troubled me, he sent me to sell buttermilk.  
 This boy whom we kept on food-wages  
 Has become my life's enemy.

In a moment the buffaloes dug a pit  
They put him in upside down and buried him, parrot.  
They took the girl on the path for home.  
As she reached the Geru River she began to weep loudly.

The water stands up on one side, parrot  
The water stands up on the other;  
In the midst was an empty place.  
Look, parrot, through the empty place Ramula has crossed the  
river  
And after her the buffaloes have crossed.

Now her Raja reaches the river  
And suddenly the river throws its waves upon him.  
O parrot, he is struggling in the water.  
Come back, my maiden, and help me cross the river;  
At least take me across the river.

From one bank calls the maiden, her Raja from the other.  
The Raja sinks for he has done the sin of murder.  
He comes up, then sinks down again.  
Where he went down the water became shallow.  
At last the Raja crossed the river and his love saluted him.  
O yoke-fellow, go back to your Palace  
I will not come with you  
For your father always troubles me;  
You must care for the child of my lap.

Come, come; maiden, I will not abuse you,  
Come, I will keep you in the house  
And I will turn my father out.

In front went the buffaloes, parrot  
Behind was the maiden  
In the midst the Raja walked.  
They went one kos, they went two kos, parrot  
They reached the boundary of their village.  
As they passed the boundary, parrot  
The panther and the tiger saluted Ramula.

When the Raja reached home, he collected the buffaloes  
And put the girl in the midst of them.  
He went into the house and asked his father, parrot,  
Where is your daughter-in-law?

Son, she is your wife, she is like an arrow of Bengal  
She dropped her baby on the floor and ran away.

Now the Raja's wrath spread like fire from heel to forehead  
The fire mounted to his forehead, parrot.  
When he heard it, the Raja sent for men to dig;  
He had a well dug before the house—did you see it, parrot?  
When it was ready, there he buried his father  
Head downwards he buried him, he buried him straight  
downwards  
He smoothed the ground above him;  
He lit a lamp there, parrot.  
He went to the village and said to the neighbours,  
Come and escort my wife to her house.

The neighbours sang auspicious songs, parrot  
And brought the maid into the house;  
Above the father's grave they set her down and bathed her,  
With hot and cold water the neighbour women bathed her.  
After the bath, parrot, she sought her little child  
And found him sleeping in the swing.  
Ramula woke him and with joy kissed his cheeks, parrot.  
Live, my baby, we have soon met again  
In the world there is worse sorrow than this.  
She took him in her lap and gave him her breast  
And after that she fed her husband, didn't you see it, parrot?

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THE STORY OF  
BAI LAHESARI AND BABU DABEL SINGH

A SUA BALLAD

*Tari nār nāna re dāda eh ho nāri nāna  
Bhala sua re eh ho nāri nāna*

It is the first month, O Dewantin, it is the second month  
Shade of the fifth month falls and you can eat Sidhauri.<sup>1</sup>  
Shade of the ninth month falls and the one mango divides  
in two.

The little girl Lahesari, O father, has been born.  
On the day Lahesari was born, that very day was born Dabel  
Singh.

In his court a spear was planted  
They were betrothed that very day  
Betel nut was broken for the girl  
Chatti was kept for her and the Barhi was observed.  
After the Barhi<sup>2</sup> came a message from the bridegroom's house.

Now little daughter Lahesari is being married  
Her friends of equal age are asked to make the booth  
The Dosi<sup>3</sup> is summoned to test the omens.  
Babu Dabel Singh has arrived for his marriage  
He and his mother are escorted to the house  
They are tied together, their mother ties their clothes together.  
After she has tied them she takes them round the pole  
They are sitting now in their mothers' laps for tika<sup>4</sup>  
After the bhanwar they assemble for the feast  
When the feast is over the groom's marriage-party quickly  
runs away.

A year passes, two years, three years  
In the twelfth year the maiden desires to visit the lake.  
Says her mother, Don't go daughter, I beg you not to go.  
When I was a child I always listened to my mother's plead-  
ings.

<sup>1</sup> Sidhauri, a ceremonial meal given to a woman in the fifth month of her pregnancy.

<sup>2</sup> Chatti and Barhi are ceremonies after the birth of a child.

<sup>3</sup> Master of Ceremonies at a wedding.

<sup>4</sup> Ceremonial greeting of bride and bridegroom by relatives and friends.

O father, I must go to bathe in the lake.  
 She asks her father, she asks her elder uncle, she asks her younger uncle;  
 She asks her brother, her brother's wife. I must go to the lake.

'Seven maids walk ahead and seven maids behind  
 Her gundri is of silver, her kalsa is of gold.<sup>1</sup>

She walks through the Lion Gate, she is going to the lake  
 She walks one kos, she walks two kos, yet she hasn't reached the lake.

She climbs a tree to see how far away it is  
 The twice seven maids climb also to see how far it is.  
 There it is, didi, there you can see it.

From the tree the maids come down and go on to the lake  
 They reach it when they have walked five kos.  
 She puts down the gudri and kalsa at the edge of the water  
 And now she is breaking the datun<sup>2</sup> of sandal.

Babu Dabel Singh has come to hunt  
 He is sitting on a stone by the side of the lake.

Get off the stone, brother, move away a little.  
 The girl speaks one word, the girl speaks two words.  
 Get off the stone, brother, move away a little.

Babu Dabel Singh turns his red red eyes on her.

At my father's house boys like you are kept for cutting grass.  
 At my father's house jutihi<sup>3</sup> girls like you are kept to fill ghursi.  
 Jutaha like you are kept to groom the horses and to get their fodder.

Jutihi like you are used at my home to throw away the rubbish  
 and to break up cowpats.

Babu Dabel Singh stares again with red red eyes and snarls  
 He begins to tremble in his rage.  
 She says, Go go my maids go and call my brother  
 Tell my brother some boy from somewhere or other  
 Is insulting your didi.

<sup>1</sup> The gundri is a roll of cloth or twisted straw placed on the head below a water-pot to keep it steady. A kalsa is a pot, often with a lamp burning on its mouth.

<sup>2</sup> Datun, a twig used for cleaning the teeth.

<sup>3</sup> The scorn implied in this word is derived from the Indian dislike and fear of things used by other people. It might be translated 'leavings', 'wastage' or 'damaged goods'.

*Gadbad gadbad* the girls ran back to the Raja's Palace.  
O brother, listen, my brother, a fellow from somewhere or  
other

Is insulting didi. So they told the story.  
Bir Singh Raja trembled *dal dal dal dal*.  
Bury him upside down, light a lamp above him !  
This is my only sister, who dares to insult her ?  
Says the father, Not so my son; call the Brahmins and let us  
read the books  
Call for the Brahmins and get the court cowdunged.

The Brahmins came and sat in the cowdunged courtyard;  
They read the earth, they read the sky, they read the four  
corners of the world.  
No no Raja this is only your own darling son-in-law who is  
sitting on the stone.  
Go maids go and bring the little girl home  
Go and tell her he is our darling son-in-law  
Go, go, with him she has a right to quarrel.

*Gadbad gadbad* ran the girls back to the lake.  
Come come, didi, it is only bato.  
When she heard the word bato she lowered her head;  
She went to the other side and bathed there.  
Angry angry the boy got up and went to his home.  
The maid thought in her mind and asked questions of her heart;  
When she had bathed she went home  
She walked five kos and reached the palace.

Dabel Singh went home and called the marriage-party  
He brought drums and made his house ready.  
The elephants and horses are ready, they have started  
They went one kos, they went two kos, they went four kos.  
When the maid heard the music she cried,  
O listen, father, to the litter of tears  
Send it back again to my sasural<sup>1</sup>.  
But, my daughter, how can I send the litter of tears away ?

The maid thinks in her mind, she goes to her elder uncle,  
She goes to her younger uncle, to her brother, to her mother.  
To her aunts, her brother's wife, and each says in turn,  
How can we send away this litter of tears ?

<sup>1</sup> We have kept the Hindi word sasural, father-in-law's house, because of its many and ambivalent associations.

The marriage-party has come  
 They are camping in the garden and the park  
 Our darling son-in-law is here escorted to the house.

Dabel Singh enters the court and his feet are washed  
 The Rani falls at his feet. Come and take pej<sup>1</sup> and water.

I will take no food, I will drink no water  
 Today I must return, I will come to feast tomorrow;  
 Let us go quickly. They are doing her hair, they put on all  
 her ornaments.

She greets her elder uncle, she greets her younger uncle,  
 Her father, her mother, her brother, her brother's wife,  
 She salutes them all down to the very youngest and gets into  
 the litter.

The farewells are over, she goes out of the village  
 They go one kos, they go two kos, they cross the boundary of  
 his mother's house.

Put down the litter. *Tar tar* he trembles  
 He takes her from the litter and removes her clothes and  
 ornaments

He dresses her in old clothes and makes her walk on foot.  
 Dabel Singh is on his horse, little girl Lahesari is walking  
 behind.

She thinks in her mind, I did not listen brother,  
 I took no advice and now I am paid for talking too much.  
 The party reaches the town, the Rani comes to greet them  
 The Rani comes with golden lamp burning with a silver wick.

Come come, my mother, do not receive her  
 Give her a sickle, send her to cut grass.

So little girl Lahesari is sent with a sickle to cut grass  
 She brings bundles for the house, she throws away the cowdung  
 She sweeps the path, she throws away the rubbish.  
 All the maid's work is done by little girl Lahesari  
 And yet they give her no proper food to eat.

Her hands and feet are tied, she is put in the pigsty  
 The rice-water is poured into a wooden trough  
 She cannot eat or drink it, she gets thin as a twig  
 One day passes, two days, pass the days of a month.

<sup>1</sup> Pej is the staple food of the aborigines in the Maikal Hills, a gruel of grain boiled in water.

An old woman goes that way, the girl calls to her,  
 Go mother and take a message to brother Bir Singh Raja :  
 Your little sister may die today, may die tomorrow.  
 Come and see her face once more. Take this message, mother.  
 I'll give you a gold mohur, only take the message quickly.

When she heard it the old woman ran *gadbad gadbad*  
 One kos she went, two kos she went, till she reached the Raja's court.

Raja O Raja, what hard sorrow for Lahesari !  
 She may die today, tomorrow, come to see her face once more.

When Bir Singh Raja hears it he trembles *tar tar*  
 His eyes grow red, his eyebrows arch like bows.  
 Go go Ghasia bring my horse and saddle it.

He speaks *kad kad* to his father  
 I am going to bring my sister home  
 If she is still alive I'll bring her on my horse.

When the Ghasia saddled the horse, the Raja leapt upon its back  
 He gave a mohur to the old woman and took her on the horse.  
 He went one kos, he went two kos, and came to the boundary ;  
 There he put down the old woman.  
 Go go and tell the girl that her brother has come.

Bir Singh has reached the town, he has dismounted in the court ;  
 He is standing there with his bridle in his hand.  
 When Dabel Singh sees him he trembles *tar tar* and says,  
 Johar.  
 Go go my sister put on your best clothes and ornaments  
 And so adorned go out to meet Lahesari's brother.

The sister comes out to meet Bir Singh Raja weeping ;  
 She weeps one word, she weeps two and three.  
 Keep quiet, little girl, and go and send my sister  
 Or with my sword I'll cut you into pieces.

Dabel Singh calls the Beldar and has a passage made  
 From the pigsty to the house, a passage under ground,  
 From the sty to the kitchen and so he brought her home.  
 She was bathed in warm water, she was bathed in cold

She was dressed in her best clothes and ornaments.  
Her hair was braided and she wore all the ornaments of her mother's house.

With all her ornaments Lahesari came out and wept *dhar dhar*.  
She went to her brother. You have come to see me, brother, may you live long.  
She wept her sadness to him. What torture I have suffered here!  
If they catch me again in this house, they'll bury me alive.  
As he heard the tale he trembled and the earth quaked beneath him.

Bir Singh caught his horse and put his sister on its back,  
Bir Singh gave them no salute as he mounted his horse,  
He mounted his horse and rode away with Bai Lahesari.

May fire burn the father-in-law's house. Brother, I'll never go there

I am your only sister, I'll live with you always  
In your house I will grow old.

On the horse brother and sister wept together.  
Sister, I wish I had died rather than that you had this trouble.

Lahesari comes to the house, she meets her father and her mother;  
She meets her elder uncle, her younger uncle, her brother's wife and all the little ones.  
They bathe her in water hot and cold  
Her brother's wife brings her food.

O bhauji, how I suffered!

May fire burn my father-in-law's house. I will grow old in my own mother's home.

When she had eaten and drunk the girl went to her attic.  
Brother Bir Singh called her maids and told them to rock her in the swing.

Now she will stay for ever in her mother's house.  
As she found happiness, so may we find it at last.

The singers live in a world unknown to the geographer.  
Every river is Ganga-Jamna; every town is Muttranagar or Brindaban. Hiragarh is the City of Diamonds; Hardinagar is the City of Turmeric with a thousand associations to the

marriage ceremony. Raiyya Sindhola has no place in the maps of the Ordinance Survey, nor has Bara Bathi Bengala—that sinister land of magic which it would be uncharitable to associate with modern Bengal. The forest visited by the singers of these songs is not divided up into coupes or marked for rotational fellings. It is the Madhuban, the Forest of Honey; Chandanban, the Forest of Sandal; Kajliban, the mysterious forest of enchantment about which no one can tell much. There is the deep pool of the Koeli River; there are the seven rivers and the sixteen streams and the great *samundar*, the tank or lake which a hero has to cross. This is the world of diamonds and honey into which the Gond and Pardhan singer can escape with the aid of the rhythm of the drum and the sweet music of his songs.

## **SAILA SONGS**



## THE SAILA DANCES

THE Saila, the dance of the men, may have originated as a patriotic demonstration before the Raja or as a ceremonial performance before the youths went out to hunt or fish. In the Dindori Tahsil it includes the Danda Pata or Stick Dance (which is its main form elsewhere) and the Baiga Dassera. It has affinities with the Muria Pus Kolang dances. It is performed from the end of the rains throughout the cold weather, though there does not seem to be any taboo on its occasional practice at other times. At its best the Saila is danced in competition; a party of boys and men go without warning to a neighbouring village and challenge them to dance; the challengers set the pace and the others have to imitate them as best they can. The result of this is that each village develops its own technique and its own secret steps. We once watched a youth from Rewa State utterly confound the dancers of Patangarh, a village itself famous for its Saila, by the variety and originality of his movements.

The Saila thus has so many variations that it is hardly possible to describe them all. We will confine ourselves to giving those of the area round Patangarh and Karanjia.

The essential formation of the Saila is a line of men circling round *bail-bhānwar*, as bullocks go round the threshing-floor, anti-clockwise. In the old days the dancers dressed up with feathers in their turbans, coloured shawls, bells on their feet and decorated sticks or bunches of feathers in their hands. Drummers do not dance, but sit on the ground near by, and beat an accompaniment not very closely related to the changes of the rhythm.

Each variation of the dance begins in the same way. The men begin walking round rather drearily; gradually the walk turns into a shuffle and a skip; they start singing with a sharp bark at the end of each line; slowly the movement increases in vivacity, and the famous *Tari-nāna* chorus begins to work itself in. The dancers bend forward, they take longer steps, two forward and one back, they begin to stamp and swing their bodies to and fro. Now they are ready to develop whatever variation they have decided to display.

We will now describe these one by one. The Thadi Saila,

which may either be Harauni—the type performed when two villages are in contest—or Bharauni—more commonly danced at a marriage, is a development of the introduction, a straightforward ‘round’ with a large variety of steps, accompanied by songs that are rather staccato and abrupt. The dancers form into a complete circle, contract and expand facing inwards, wheel round and move out and in skipping and jumping. They again make a line and each circles round his neighbour. They hop on each foot and turn in the air, throw up their arms, bend to the ground and swing them through their feet. In the ‘Dance of the Lame Hunter’, they advance stamping, bending down low with one arm outstretched and touching the ground.

A typical Bharauni Thadi song is as follows :—

52

*Tarinaki na more nānāre nāna  
 Tari nāna na more nāna jogire  
 Hātema dharale rāmtengari pithe mrigchhāla jogire  
 Janamina lethai more bābāre bairāgi jogire.*

TAKE a Ram-stick in your hand, a deer-skin on your back  
 And so take the form of a Bairagi-Jogi.

The Lahaki Saila generally takes the same form, but is done with more speed and vigour. A Jhulania Lahaki song, of which we will now give an example, is sung with a swinging movement and rather sentimentally.

53



*Tarināke nāmore nānāre nāna  
 Tarināna more nāna re tarināna more nāna  
 Chalwo sāli chalwo sāli hāril dekhela jābore  
 Hāril dekhela jābo  
 Nahi jāu bāto nahi jāu bhāto  
 Bhaiya gāli dehi jo bhaiyā gāli dehi  
 Tor bhaiyāla mand piyāhu  
 Tola leyi jāhu wo tolā leyi jāhu.*

COME my wife's little sister  
 Come, to see the green pigeon  
 Let's go to see the green pigeon  
 I daren't go, bato, I daren't go  
 My brother will abuse me  
 I will give your brother liquor  
 And then I'll take you away.

The Shikar Saila is a vigorous and exciting dance that imitates the hunting of a deer. The men form a long line and most of them carry sticks to represent guns. There is a lot of stamping and gesticulation; at one point the party squats down and takes aim with the sticks; at another they creep slowly forward; then they jump up and dance on with the left foot forward, the body forward over it and the right leg in the air. Sometimes the head of the line chases the tail, sometimes a boy pretends to be the deer.

*Tarināke nāmore nānāre tari nānā more nānā  
 Udro bhuli pej pile sāmbhar kheda jābo  
 Bhatela mār läbo.*

COME dog and drink your gruel  
 Let us go to hunt the sambhar  
 (At least) let us kill a hare and bring it home.

The Dhimra-Gath Saila is a round game in which each dancer catches hold of his predecessor's loin-cloth, and the line slowly winds itself up by threading through itself into a fisherman's knot.

The Goddami Saila imitates a railway train. After the line of dancers has been round a sufficient number of times, it halts and each man hooks his left leg into a sort of loop formed by the leg and arm of the man behind him. When they are all hooked up they dance round on one leg, moving in line like a train.

*Tari nānare nānā tari nāri ga  
 Rel gādi pahiya dolai dhaapel ga rel gādi  
 Janamina lethai rāja angrej ga rel gādi  
 Pahiya dolai dhaapel ga rel gādi.*

THE rails tremble as the train goes by  
 The birth of the train is of the Raja English  
 The rails tremble as the train goes by.

The Atari Saila is the most picturesque and dramatic of the Saila variations; we have seen the same dance, though with other interpretations of its meaning, among the Parja-Dhurwa, the Ghotul Muria of Bastar, the Didai Parja of Orissa and in the Dangs of western India. It is no doubt widely distributed. The men form a large double circle, the taller and stronger being on the inside. Each clasps his neighbour's arms. After they have danced round for a time, the inner circle squats down, and the outer circle climbs onto its shoulders. As they are squatting they dance slowly round and then rise into the air with loud cries. The whole circle then circulates slowly, the men below swinging their buttocks from side to side.

This dance has various interpretations. By some it is said to represent an attic at the top of a house, from which a pretty girl looks down. The Baiga say it imitates the cutting of *dahi*—the lopping of branches from the tops of trees to spread over the fields. Others say it represents the way the Lamana hoist up sacks that have fallen from their bullocks. Whatever it means the Atari dance always causes a lot of excitement, and girls run to watch it.

## 56

*Tari nāna more nāna*  
*Atāri ma god jhulāy wāri ke nanado* •  
*Janamina lethai re jhulāwai wāri ke nanado*  
*Atāri ma god jhulāy.*

My darling nanand is swinging her legs in the attic  
 I see it in my mind—my darling nanand is swinging  
 She is swinging her legs in the attic.

Other movements of the dance with which special songs are not associated are these—

The Baithak Saila. A very vigorous stamping dance. The men stamp twice with the left foot, then twice with the right. Then they squat down and hop round and round. They halt and sing, then go on again, turn round and hop

back, and finally break up and go hopping all over the place in wild confusion.

The Chakramar Saila. This imitates the movements of a lizard. The party squats down and hops from one side to another. Each extends his right leg fully behind him and moves his body to and fro in a wriggling movement like a lizard. Then the right leg is waved right round forward and back under the left leg to its original position.

The Chamka Kudna Saila. This is supposed to be like a deer jumping to get out of a trap. Each dancer takes a stick, and after the usual preliminaries, holds it in both hands in front of him. He bends low swinging to and fro, stands up and dances round, bends down again, then suddenly jumps through his hands over the stick, dances round with the stick now held behind him, jumps back. The dance ends with everyone jumping independently, in a way that certainly resembles the movements of a frightened deer.

The Saila, in fact, is a form of physical exercise and drill that can take endless varieties and forms. The songs are usually short and rather monotonous. A few are 'progressive' in character, sometimes going on to a highly vulgar conclusion.

In nearly every Saila, generally in the latter part of the song, the dancers use a curious expression—*janamina lethai*—which means literally 'it has taken birth'. To understand the meaning of this we must give the legend of the origin of the Saila dance current in south-east Mandla. When the world was made all the gods and goddesses went to look at it. As they travelled from west to east they came to Bara Bathi Bengala, a country we meet again in the Hirakhan epic. These Bengalis used to turn all who sang or danced into goats and sacrifice them to the gods. When the gods and goddesses came to that country the Bengalis refused to give them anywhere for their camp. It was raining hard and so the party sheltered under a siuna tree and talked for a long while how they were to see Bara Bathi Bengala. Sharada and Sarsuti were there and they taught them how to deceive the Bengalis. 'Decorate yourselves', they said, 'with peacock's feathers and go dancing to that country. The girls of every village will be so excited about you that they will ask you to remain for four days.' The gods did this and were allowed to stay in that country for a time. Thence they came to Amarkantak.

Here Rewa Naik was camping with his nine lakhs of

bullocks laden with myrabolams. When he saw the dancers he thought they were robbers and told them that his bullocks were laden with gold mohurs which he offered to give them if they would spare his life. When he opened his sacks he found they really were full of gold and he made a great temple in honour of the Narbada with the money.

Now the girls of Bengal followed the dancers all the way to Amarkantak and the Bengalis chased them and tried to take them back. When they refused to go they turned the girls into stones which still may be seen in the forest near Barbaspur in Mandla District.

In the same jungle under Dhuti Hill the twelve Gond brothers were hunting. Their turbans had fallen off and they had put peacock's feathers in their hair instead. When Sharada and Sarseti saw the Gond brothers they thought that they were the other gods disguised as dancers and they taught them every kind of dance. Even so the Gond brothers were not able to dance properly but they went *matak matak*, jogging their bodies, to their home. Their old father said, 'You have come very late (*selse*)'.

After this the real divine dancers used to come often to the place and possess the bodies of the Gond dancers so that they danced in divine fashion. The dance itself was called Saila because it had made the brothers late for their work as it does even today. The expression *janamina lethai* refers to the birth of the gods in the bodies of the dancers and suggests, what every witness of the dance will have noticed, that the performers really are inspired just as if they were magicians celebrating a mystery.

Since the dancers are possessed by the 'gods' during the Saila it is said that no witch can injure them at this time by her magic and that nothing ever can tire or weary the singers. 'The dancers' legs remain fresh however hard they dance.'

The delight and excitement of a village visited by a party of dancers is shown in the following Saila song :—

*Nari nāna ri nāna O tari hara nāna.*

THE music of the drums has filled the ten quarters of the world  
The nine hundred Baghel Gond are dancing  
This village was on a hill and under the hill lived the rats  
When they heard the music even the rats danced in the water

Two parrots with red beaks danced with them in the water  
 The rats by their dancing made foam on the water  
 Down to the spring came the water-girls  
 The rats had caught a tiger  
 The girls excited watched the fight  
 Hiding behind twigs and leaves  
 What was happening up on the hill?  
 Even the cooking-pots were dancing *sai sai*  
 Smoke went up into the roof  
 One little girl with oval face  
 Went out to fetch water  
 And a boy with a monkey's nose  
 Carried her away.

*Tari nāna tewo tari nāna*

They were wearing long skirts  
 They were dancing to the very edge of Daugard  
 Where even prostitutes were invited  
 They taught the Saila to others  
 And their songs excited the girls with three braids in their hair  
 They sung one Saila after another.  
 The Saila looked as if a Raja had come with his army  
 There were nine hundred soldiers  
 Nine hundred Baghel Gond were dancing  
 Some were playing *kati kati*  
 Their urine ran down the hillside as if there was a flood  
 It was like the marriage of a Gond and Gondin  
 But there was no giving and taking that day  
 There was fire in the ghursi  
 But they would not even give dung cakes to the Saila boys  
 There were pigs in the styes  
 But they only gave the boys gruel.  
 Why don't you cook aconite and poison us as a mother-in-law  
 would?  
 But a girl was giving her lover venison  
 In a corner of the house where none could see.

*Nari nāna ri nāna O tari hara nāna.*

Alfred Williams gives an interesting account of similar singing competitions, though in this case unaccompanied by dancing, formerly practised in England. It was common, years ago, during wet weather, when labour out of doors was

at a standstill, for the rustics to assemble at the inns and have singing matches, in order to see—not which could sing best, but which could sing most. 'There were seldom more than two competing upon any one day. And usually there was no chance for but one of them to sing. He commonly issued a challenge to the village, or the neighbourhood, and declared himself able and willing to sing continuously for twelve hours—from morning till night—and to have a fresh piece each time. It consequently took two days to decide the match. Of course, the inns were full of spectators. They were the daymen on the farms. Under the influence of Apollo they left their work, and had no thought of returning until their musical appetite had been satisfied. All the pieces were to be sung from memory. It was something of a treat for the audience. Many of them strained their ears for new pieces and went not away disappointed. Doubtless the singers got very tired, and the music grated, before the twelve hours were up. But they were very strong and had voices like organs, while their throats were lubricated with frequent draughts of ale.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Williams, *op. cit.*, 14.

## SAILA SONGS

58

*Tari nānāre more*  
Why is the water in the well  
Splashing *lijak-lijar*?  
Is it the fair girl who has come for water?  
For in the well there is no bucket  
And in the well there is no rope.

59

*Tari nānāre nāna*  
My Raja, sit on the bed  
For today Sakhil Dauna will be born  
My Raja, sit on the bed.

This is interpreted as referring to an incident when a husband has returned from a long journey to find his wife about to give birth to a son whose name she has been told in a dream is to be Sakhil Dauna.

60

GAJABEL, Gajabel  
Your flowers come out in clusters  
But when my arhar pulse is born  
Its flowers will be like yours.

The Gajabel is one of the many types of ceremonial friendship. It is actually the name of a creeper.

61

*Tarihari nāna nānāre nāna*  
He went to fetch mangoes from the forest  
He threw his stick into the tree  
But it hit her little finger O  
And in her wrist she felt the pain.

He threw his stick into the tree  
 But it hit her on the wrist O  
 And in her elbow she felt the pain.

He threw his stick into the tree  
 But it hit her on her knee O  
 And in her thigh she felt the pain . . .  
*Nānāre nāna nānāre nāna*

## 62

O GIRL, go grind beneath the distant mango tree  
 There is the grinding-stone  
 Grind, and make your brother grind with you  
 There is a swing  
 Swing and make your brother swing with you  
 There is a bed  
 Sleep and make your brother sleep with you . . .

## 63

O BROTHER, get up, a scorpion has bitten me  
 Brother, get up and stop the pain.

What will you give me in return ?

I will give you the ring on my finger  
 Brother, get up and stop the pain.

What will I do with the ring on your finger  
 When I have neither home nor wife ?

I will give you the bangle from my wrist  
 Brother, get up and stop the pain . . .

The word 'brother' in this and the preceding song is meant literally only as a naughty joke : the word is often used in the sense of 'friend'.

## 64

*Tari nāna mor nāna re nāna*  
*Tari nāna mor nāna*  
 THE Raja-Jogi is like this  
 Never trust fire and water  
 For their ways are strange

Beware of them  
 For they have little love  
 From them is born the Prince.

65

*Tari ke na mor nānāre nāna*  
 FRIEND, you are always laughing  
 The peacock dances in your braided hair  
 Friend, you are always laughing.

Compare No. 29. But here the 'braided hair' seems to have a reference to marriage and may suggest that the girl addressed is already the wife of someone else.

66

*Tari nākena mor nānāre nāna tari nāna mor nāna*  
 Down the narrow way Sukhia goes for water  
 In the middle of the path she stops to smile.

This little Saila song, repeated over and over again during the dance, has an economy and natural beauty characteristic of Pahari painting.

## RIDDLE SONGS

THE Dhanda Saila is a very interesting type of dance. The song consists of a riddle, which is sung over and over again until the village challenged can answer it, whereupon the answer is often embodied in the song. The dance is of the basic Saila type, but includes movements intended to illustrate, the riddle. The dance thus becomes a sort of charade.

67

*Tari nāke na mor nānāre nāna  
Tari nāna mor nāna  
Kāri chirai ke kāri khodro kāri charan bar jay  
Patthar chadke pāni piwai dola chad ghar ay  
Janamina lethai nauwa ghar tura āy.*

THE black bird has a black nest  
It feeds on the black grass  
It climbs on a stone to drink water  
It comes home in a litter  
In a barber's house it is born as a boy.

The answer to this, which is not given in the song, is—A razor.

68

*Tari nāke na mor nānāre nāna  
Tari nāna mor nāna  
Jangal chād bakulaya bina jibh ke chara charai  
Pāni piyat mar jāy  
Janamina lethai mor pāwak deo ay.*

THE crane climbs up the mountain  
And feeds on grass without a tongue  
It dies when it drinks water  
It is the god Fire.

69

TARI Hill is very steep  
Whence the pure water comes

Like mist the water  
Comes to earth from heaven.

There is a wonder we have not seen before  
Bullocks are coming. On four pillars are four horns  
Wise man, solve this riddle.

There is another wonder we have not seen before  
A Jogi is coming. Without hands or feet  
He goes a thousand kos.

There is a third wonder we have not seen before  
A deer is coming. It jumps north south east west  
In a moment it jumps.

There is a fourth wonder we have not seen before  
An elephant is coming  
It eats from its backside.

Wise man, solve the riddle. If you're really wise, you'll  
answer  
If you're stupid get up and go away  
Salute the poet, our Sahib is very learned  
From the beginning we sing in his name.

The answers to these four 'wonders' are not given in the  
song.

70

SLOWLY slowly runs the quail  
Friend you will be defeated  
In twelve forts you have twelve girls  
In thirteen forts your name is ruined  
Each of the girls has ears twelve fingers long  
In each ear are two gold bridles  
Tell me the meaning friend  
Or you will lose the game.

Unfortunately as with many of the riddles that are used  
as songs rather than simply as a test of wit, no one can  
remember what the answer is.

71

To Kajliban I go  
 To Brindaban I go  
 Trusting in God  
 The sky is my mother and father  
 The earth is my camping-ground  
 A flower blossoms  
 Without branch or leaves.

This is—The sun.

72

IN Chunukpur there was a theft  
 In Chutukpur the thief was caught  
 In Gaddipur the thief was tried  
 In Nakhunpur he was executed.

Chunukpur is the hair, in which a louse is stealing. Chutukpur represents the two fingers with which it was caught, the *chutuk* being the noise made by snapping the fingers. Gaddipur is the palm of the hand. Nakhunpur stands for the nails between which the thief was squashed to death.

Asking *brahmodya* or poetical riddles was a very ancient practice in India and formed part of the Ashvamedha horse-sacrifice. Just before the actual smothering of the horse, the Hotri and the Brahmin began to ask riddles, an exercise in which only they were permitted to take part. This ceremonial use of the riddle is found in many parts of the world, and Frazer has suggested that it may have originally been adopted at times when for certain reasons the speaker was forbidden the use of direct terms.<sup>1</sup>

Among the aborigines the custom is found in certain tribes at the beginning of the marriage ceremony. In Gond and Pardhan weddings in Mandla, for example, when the bridegroom's representative goes to fetch the bride, riddles are posed and must be answered before he can take her away.

Among the preliminaries to a Birhor marriage there is also a time when riddles are put and answered. When the bride's party comes to the bridegroom's house, hunting-nets are spread for the guests to sit on. When they are seated, the bridegroom's people ask them, 'What did you see on your

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, ix, 121.

way here?' The guests reply, 'Oh the way, we met with a girl and asked her, "Where is your father gone?"' The girl answered, "My father is gone to catch the rains of the heaven." This meant he had gone to gather thatching-grass. Then we asked her, "Where is your mother gone?" The girl answered, "She is gone to take a dead person inside the house". This meant she had gone to transplant paddy-seedlings as a labourer.'

The bride's people then say, 'O friends! A mango tree bore fruit; an old woman told her husband, "Get me the mango by throwing a stick at it" (meaning, get me rice-beer to drink). The old man threw a stick at it and the mango fell and the stick came down on the other side of the tree striking down a deer as it fell (suggesting, let a goat be slain for our entertainment)'. Men of each party now greet those of the other party and enquire about their health and well-being. Then riddles of a certain type known as *ganamrea bhanita* are asked and solved. For this occasion, five jars of rice-beer were already set abrewing on the return of the three men who had gone to the bride's house for the Takchanrhi ceremony. One of these pots of rice-beer is now brought out to the court, strained, and distributed to the guests. This is called 'the fatigue-removing jar'.<sup>1</sup>

In Roy's description of an Uraon marriage he gives one section as *Khiri Tengna* (propounding riddles). This is the time at which the marriage sermon is given and rice-beer which is called 'riddle-propounding rice-beer', is given to bride and bridegroom, though they must not drink it. The marriage sermon commences with a riddle, but Roy does not make it clear whether during the drinking of the beer riddles are proposed and answered by the guests.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Nora Chadwick points out<sup>3</sup> how Tatar and Russian riddles, like the majority of Galla proverbs, are extensively concerned with the universe and natural phenomena. 'These also form a part of the literature of celebration, or, to be more precise, of social ritual. Among Russian peasants in the governments of Yaroslav and Pskov and among the people of Ladakh, riddles are said to have formed a constituent part of the ceremony of betrothal down to last century, the bride

<sup>1</sup> S. C. Roy, *The Birhors* (Ranchi, 1925), 159 f.

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Roy, *Uraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), 16 ff.

<sup>3</sup> N. K. Chadwick, 'The Distribution of Oral Literature in the Old World', *J.R.A.I.*, lxix (1939), 86, where references are given.

or bridegroom's ability to answer riddles being regarded as a measure of the mental equipment and social qualification for the role of husband or wife, *i.e.*, an 'intelligence test'. Tatar oral literature furnishes numerous examples of the same custom. Riddle-contests are also popular among the Tatars, generally, and their literature furnishes many examples of contests between two sages, or between a sage and an ordinary person. In many such instances the relative emphasis on ritual, education or entertainment varies, though the same form of literature may be used in every case.'

The Dhanda Saila songs given above are in the ancient Indian tradition of the wit-combat. Penzer points out that these combats, which sometimes took the form of a series of riddles, were a common feature of entertainments at the courts of Asiatic monarchs.<sup>1</sup> The reader will at once be reminded of the story of the Queen of Sheba who 'came to prove the wisdom of Solomon with hard questions',<sup>2</sup> of Samson and his riddle, and of the riddle of the Sphinx.

In Indian fiction there is a rather disappointing account of a wit-combat in Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagara* where a learned Princess is defeated by Vinitamati. But later this same Vinitamati is himself vanquished in dispute by a Buddhist mendicant. In Parshvanatha's account of Vikrama's adventures as a parrot, there is a well-known series of riddles.<sup>3</sup> The story of 'Abu Al-Husn and his Slave-Girl Tawaddud' in *The Arabian Nights* (Burton, Vol. V, pp. 189 ff) is on the same lines.

Two types of tale which turn on the hero's solution of a riddle are generally distinguished. In one the hero gains a princess in marriage by this means: in the other a prisoner saves himself from death by setting a riddle that his judges cannot solve.<sup>4</sup> F. J. Norton has recently studied this second motif in great detail in the pages of *Folk-Lore*.<sup>5</sup>

A Gond story from Mandla illustrate the first type of tale,

<sup>1</sup> Penzer, *op. cit.*, vi, 74 f.

<sup>2</sup> The riddles of the Queen of Sheba have been extensively discussed in literature. See W. A. Clouston, *Flowers from a Persian Garden* (London, 1890), 218 and 273.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Bloomfield, 'On the Art of Entering Another's Body', *Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc.*, lvi, 31 ff.

<sup>4</sup> A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folk-tale* (Helsinki, 1928), 128 and 139.

<sup>5</sup> F. J. Norton, 'Prisoner who Saved his Neck with a Riddle', *Folk-Lore*, liii, 27 ff.

though the heroine is not a Princess nor is a marriage the result achieved.

A girl longed to sleep with her husband's younger brother. But he was afraid of his brother and refused. At last after she had begged him to come to her for many days, he said, 'I will only come if you bring me the milk of a fly, the pith of a reed, a headless goat, a one-legged quail and let me come to you riding on a horse without eyes'. The girl tried and tried to find these things, but could get nothing. At last she went to a clever Malin who at once solved the riddle. 'The milk of a fly', she said, 'is honey, the pith of a reed is sugar-cane, the headless goat is parched barra, the one-legged quail is a brinjal and the horse without eyes is a pair of sandals.' When the girl told her lover the answer to his riddle, he was compelled to yield to her desire and went to her.

Another Mandla story shows how a clever boy redeems a debt by setting the family creditor a riddle he cannot solve.

A Brahmin went to beg at the house of a Gond. Everyone was away in the field except a little boy. When the Brahmin asked where the family was, the boy replied, 'Mother has gone to turn one into two, and if she has come she won't come. Father has gone to stop the flow of the heayens. Brother has gone to earn abuse from the passers-by. I am examining one and thus know everything.' The Brahmin was unable to understand what the boy meant, and agreed that, if he could explain the riddles, it would show that the Gond were more learned than the Brahmin. The boy explained that 'My mother has gone to make dal out of gram, and due to the flooded river even if she has come, she won't come. Father has gone to cut grass, brother has gone to make a fence of thorns across a path and thus earn abuse from the travellers. I myself am cooking rice, and by tasting one grain can know whether or no the rest is ready.'

There is a charming use of a riddle in love-making in an anonymous poem from Cotgrave's *Wit's Interpreter* (1655) quoted in Norman Ault's *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*.

Down in a garden sat my dearest Love,  
Her skin more soft and white than down of swan,  
More tender-hearted than the turtle-dove,  
And far more kind than bleeding pelican.  
I courted her; she rose and blushing said,

'Why was I born to live and die a maid?'  
 With that I plucked a pretty marigold,  
 Whose dewy leaves shut up when day is done.  
 'Sweeting,' I said, 'arise, look and behold,  
 A pretty riddle I'll to thee unfold :  
 These leaves shut in as close as cloistered nun,  
 Yet will they open when they see the sun.'  
 'What mean you by this riddle, sir?' she said,  
 'I pray expound it.' Then I thus began :  
 'Know maids are made for men, man for a maid.'  
 With that she changed her colour and grew wan :  
 'Since that this riddle you so well unfold,  
 Be you the sun, I'll be the marigold.'

An earlier riddle by Sir Thomas Wyatt in Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557) is more in the direct manner of the Saila songs.

Vulcan begat me : Minerva me taught :  
 Nature, my mother : Craft nourisht me year by year :  
 Three bodies are my foode : my strength is in naught.  
 Anger, wrath, waste, and noise are my children dear.  
 Guess, friend, what I am : and how I am wraught :  
 Monster of sea, or of land, or of elsewhere.  
 Know me, and use me : and I may thee defend :  
 And if I be thine enemy, I may thy life end.

The answer is—A gun.'

<sup>1</sup> A considerable collection of Indian riddles, with comment by W. G. Archer, Durga Bhagvat and Verrier Elwin, will be found in 'An Indian Riddle Book', *Man in India*, xxiii, Part iv. For rhymed riddles which present some analogies to those printed in the text, see M. Longworth Dames, *Popular Poetry of the Baloches* (London, 1907), 195 ff.

## DANDA SAILA SONGS

73

BHAUJI, how I long for a mate  
Says the nanand to her bhauji  
If you put your hand in his pocket  
You'll find no money there  
Lovely girl, aren't you ashamed ?  
Says the dewar, Even if we walk close together  
Why should we be ashamed ?

Guests have come to your house, goodwife  
Bring us water in a pot.

Where is my wife ?  
She is going to have a child  
Send for the midwife, send for the nurse  
What knife did they use to cut the cord ?  
What broken pot for her bath ?  
The cord was cut with a golden knife  
She was bathed with a silver pot.

74

HE has his own village  
Full of tenants  
So crowded  
That each roof joins the neighbour's  
The streets are full  
Of bullock-carts set end to end  
Even the Kotwar on his rounds  
Rides through the market on a horse  
There are so many people  
That they sleep in the stables  
There are so many spears  
That many rust for lack of use  
The widows wear bangles and neckbands  
And even the coolies  
Have horses in their stables.

A newly-married bride is boasting to her family about the wealth and importance of her husband. As indicating what the aboriginal considers significant the song is interesting, and may be compared to the description of Hiragarh in the epic of Hirakhan Kshattri.

## DANDA AND SAILA SEASONAL SONGS

THE idea of writing poetry about the months or seasons of the year is rather an obvious one and has been attempted by many poets since Horace wrote his great Ode. An Italian poet Folgore Da San Geminiano wrote a series of sonnets to the club of Siennese noblemen which is mentioned scornfully by Dante. These sonnets, although addressed to a company of licentious youths, are remarkable for their freedom from sexual suggestiveness and refer chiefly to the physical and material comforts that the seasons of the year can bring. Thus February offers gallant sport; March gives plenteous fisheries; there are horses and games in May, falconry in September, magnificent feasts in the winter months. Spenser's *The Shepheards Calender* is more concerned with love, sometimes of an unconventional kind. Thomson wrote, not according to the months but to the four main seasons, and he chiefly emphasizes the descriptive aspects of the changing year and its philosophic interpretation. William Morris uses the different months as a means of introducing the stories in his *Earthly Paradise* and achieves some fine descriptive writing in his account of them.

In India seasonal songs lend themselves to the long drawn-out music of the Stick and Parrot Dances. W. G. Archer has recorded some remarkable Chaumasa, a cycle of songs to cover the six months of the rainy season, which are sung during the rains by upper-caste Hindu women in Bihar. These songs are far more frankly concerned with sex than are any of the poems to which we have referred. The same may be said of the Kajali songs, in almost all of which 'the theme is one of sexual fancy' and the Barsati which is another name for Kajali and differs only in having a more frequent emphasis on the season. The underlying note of the Chaumasa songs is sexual frustration which is always specially connected with the rains.<sup>1</sup> The Pardhan songs also are not unconcerned with sexual frustration and desire, but they are less detailed on this subject and resemble in some ways the Western descriptive tradition.

The Gond and Pardhan have now adopted the Hindu

<sup>1</sup> See W. G. Archer, *The Wedding of the Writers* and 'Seasonal Songs in Patna District' in *Man in India*, xxii.

calendar. Their months do not correspond exactly with the European months and are therefore printed so as to indicate how they overlap.

PART OF JANUARY	MAGH
FEBRUARY	PHAGUN
MARCH	CHAIT
APRIL	BAISAKH
MAY	JETH
JUNE	ASADH
JULY	SAWAN
AUGUST	BHADON
SEPTEMBER	KUAR
OCTOBER	KARTIK
NOVEMBER	AGHAN
DECEMBER	PUS
PART OF JANUARY	

*Nāna ho hari nāno ho rām*

O FRIEND, in Chait my son was born  
 The *chok* was smeared with sandal paste  
 And bordered with elephant pearls  
 The pitcher was of gold  
 But if my brother had been here  
 He would have lit his own golden lamp  
 And with joy brought my baby gifts.

Friend, the month of Chait is done  
 Now Baisakh is here  
 The heat rains down  
 Our bodies have grown hot as iron  
 Yet even in this heat my brother  
 Has gone to bring his wife.

Baisakh descends, Jeth rises up  
 The wind comes  
 As though heat itself were blowing.  
 But then comes Asadh  
 The clouds appear with thunder  
 The first rain falls  
 The birds sing again  
 And the peacock cries in the forest  
 The old bullocks are afraid  
 For there will be work to do  
 And the poor farm-labourers  
 Are more frightened than the bullocks  
 The farmers throw their seed  
 Madly about the fields  
 The doves and pigeons  
 Break the seeds and eat them.

In Sawan it is easier to plough  
 The tiny fish invade the fields  
 And jump about for water  
 The rain comes down in little drops  
 Yet the farmers are always wet.

Now comes Bhadon when it is always midnight  
 And the darkness is greater for the flashing lightning  
 No one is sure whether her husband will return by evening  
 Tell me, will my love come or no?

Kuar is surrounded by the sun  
 I said to my husband  
 Sleep away from me  
 It is too hot for it  
 Give up for the time the work of the mattress  
 Lie down, my Raja, I will fan you  
 Don't plough any more  
 Lean the ploughshare against the wall  
 And I will fan you  
 If you plough, great clods of earth will be upturned  
 At such a time women take the pej  
 In two pots to their husbands in the fields  
 And the mad husband gulps it down  
 Yet he is thinner than before  
 O friend, their ribs show through the skin  
 And the skin is loose  
 Yet they eat everything you give them.

Kartik brings Diwali  
 And we have two lamps for it  
 We touch the lantern's feet  
 O Lakshmi, stay with us always  
 And may our husbands live for ever.

Aghan and Pus come now; rain drizzles down  
 When the rain falls on the pitcher  
 It looks as if it were trembling  
 In these months the beds also tremble  
 And the bed with no husband—  
 How her liver burns!

Magh is the religious month  
 These five Sundays we keep fasting  
 When the night of Siva comes  
 All men are happy,

In Phagun colour sprouts everywhere  
 And great bazaars  
 But in all these there is no joy  
 Without a husband.

About the pihu bird many tender and romantic legends have gathered. It is sometimes called the bird of sin, because the female once put ashes instead of flowers on her husband's head as he was setting out on a journey. A Baiga version of the story is that the pihu's husband was taken by the police to the jail and died there, and she now watches for him day and night in vain, for ever crying '*More pihu, more pihu, my love, my love*'. The Pardhan say that the pihu was once a Lamsena boy and his parents-in-law sent him to get worms from a field of linseed. He could not bring the correct amount by evening, and so they put him in jail and there he cries '*Pihu pihu*' as he remembers his wife.

Of the relations between the male and the female birds, it is said that the male only comes to his wife in Asadh and can only drink rain-water. For the rest of the year the female bird is lonely and sings her song in tears. In Chait and Baisakh she cries '*More pihu*' and in Jeth she says '*Mai piāsi hu, I am thirsty*'. Then with the coming of the rains, comes the male bird, and their happiness is fulfilled.

The following song describes the feeling of the female bird deserted by her husband, and by implication the emotions of all women enduring similar frustrations.

O MY love is on his way to the Honey City  
He is flying to the Honey City.

Asadh has come covering the four quarters with clouds  
The lightning flashes in the clouds  
The rains have filled the lakes and turned  
The country into Brindaban  
How happily  
We drink together the rainy water.

Sawan has come, and O my friend  
He is offended with me  
For my enemy, my co-wife  
Has roused his love for her.

Terrible are the nights of Bhadon, my friend  
No sleep comes to the eyes  
Come, my god, come if you desire me  
But do not trick me with false promises.

He promised he would come  
In the nights of the spotless moon  
But the moon's light  
Only tortures me like fire  
Were I a Jogi  
I would go from forest to forest  
My body smeared with ashes  
For my lord has gone to the Honey City.

Kartik comes and the girls  
Will burn lights in their courts  
But while he is away my body burns  
As if all the lamps were in it.

Aghan brings bad news from my bird  
For now I know my enemy's love delays him  
While I sit pining for him.

Pus is very cold  
There is no sleep for my two eyes  
I sit with rosary round my neck  
And say Ram Ram with all my strength.

Magh brings the spring  
But how can I put on my ornaments

If he is not in the house?  
 Friend, my peace and joy is taken  
 By my enemy—may she be burnt!

In Phagun they all play with coloured water  
 But on whose body should I throw my coloured water?

Chait is full of tesu flowers  
 And greedy for them come the bees  
 But my body is burning like a forest fire.

O Baisakh come and with your heat  
 Bring out my sweat and quench  
 The burning of my body.

In Jeth I send my message  
 My pihu, my pihu,  
 I am thirsty, I am thirsty.

77

O THE month of Sawan  
 The rain falls *rimik jhimik*  
 The month of Sawan O  
*Rimik jhimik* falls the rain  
 The court is full of mud  
 How hard it was to sow the maize  
 The mustard's not yet ready  
 O the month of Sawan  
 I've tied the bullocks with a rope  
 With cord I've tied the buffaloes  
 When I get home  
 There'll be no food prepared  
 O the month of Sawan  
 Cook pulse, cook rice, cook vegetables  
 O stranger girl, be pleased with me  
 In the month of Sawan.

78

WHEN does it rain?  
 When do the floods come down?  
 When do the rocks break among the hills?  
 The rains start in Jeth  
 The floods come down in Asadh  
 In Sawan the rocks break among the hills.

## **DADARIA SONGS**



## DADARIA SONGS

- THE Dadaria, or Salho as they are called in Chhattisgarh, are the true *ban-bhajan* or forest-songs. They are sung by the people at work in field or forest, by groups of girls on their way to a bazaar, by travellers resting by the fire at night.
- Young lovers sing them to each other, and many a proposal has been made and elopement arranged in verse. At weddings, the two parties sing them against one another competitively; while they are singing boys and girls throw rings to each other and exchange gifts of tobacco and betel. The Dadaria can also be used as taunt-songs; at one time a notorious criminal, in whose activities we had ventured to interfere, never passed our house without singing at the top of his voice a selection of obscene and insulting Dadaria.

These are the most spontaneous and original of the songs. There is a great corpus or floating reserve of Dadaria verse, on which boys and girls draw according to their knowledge and their fancy. But they also often improvise, a task which is facilitated by the rather cheap and easy rhymes that are in fashion.

The music is always fresh and thrilling, with a lilt, a joy, an excitement that never stales. The songs are sung very loudly, at a high pitch; they are the radio messages of the aboriginal. They are usually sung antiphonally; one verse of a Dadaria expects an answer.

Though the music is always lovely the words of the Dadaria songs are often cheap and facile, a fault forced upon them by their rhymed couplet form and extempore improvised character. The singers are more interested in getting a rhyme at the end of the line than in what they say: that is why the second line of a Dadaria often has so little connexion with the first. This is not always so, of course: there are Dadaria—some of them are in this collection—which have the grace and logic of true poems; but it must be remembered that the songs given here are only a tiny percentage of the great volume of Dadaria verse which is constantly being created and revised.

Certain stages in these rhyming improvisations can be

traced. There are first the rhymed and punning songs of children.

Dani climbed the *chhāni* (roof)  
There he called for *pāni* (water)  
He was laughed at by Kanhi  
And she took away his *bāni* (voice).

Or again, 'When Gitti got a *chitti* (letter), the Ahira took it into the *gahira* (deep water).' 'Hagri set a trap for Kabri in a *dabri* (ditch)' 'Bhatri lost his *gatri* (bundle), so Hadka took a *dudka* (gourd) and sought it in the road.'

There are other sayings and Nursery Rhymes, often very coarse, which teach children from an early age the use of 'internal rhyme' and the technique of sound within the line which is used to such great advantage in the Karma songs. If one of a party of children breaks wind, the others play a sort of *Ena deena dina do*.

*Adi pādi kinhi pādi*  
*Rāmāji ki ghodi pādi*  
*Tai tui phus.*

Someone's farted, who has farted ?  
Ramaji's mare has farted  
*Tai tui phus.*

Sometimes, a boy says to a group of friends :

*Mut mutāsi nahi mutāsi tor bahin chodāsi.*  
Go and piss, if you don't piss, you'll lie with your sister.

Children sing very quickly and loudly such almost meaningless songs as,

*Kukri ke lichpich*  
*Mangan ke chhāta*  
*Hagai gironda lila Raja.*

As the children grow older, they improvise couplets of a more serious character.

*Hey mor kaleja*  
*Kaha hai mor māya ?*

O my liver  
Where is my love ?

*Hai mor hira  
Tola dehu pira.*

O my diamond  
I am going to hurt you.

*Hai re mor phohi  
Karela debe ka hohi?*

O my peacock-float  
If you let me do it,  
What does it matter?

The rhymes need not be exact and sometimes the effect is obtained by the repetition of a word.

*Tola pāto  
To leto kora.*

If I get you,  
In my lap I'll seat you.

*Tathiya ki bāsi  
Tathiya jurai  
Bina dekhe tola  
Ankhi jhurai.*

The stale food in the pot  
Cools in the pot  
Without seeing you  
My eyes dry up.

From this it is an easy step to the Dadaria improvisations; both the rhymed catches and the Dadaria are used for the same purpose of love-making. They are often in fact what Arthur Waley has called 'love-epigrams', referring to the slight, one-topic poems of the Wu district in China, comparable to the *coplas* of Spain.<sup>1</sup> The Dadaria appear to be not unlike the Sheli sung by the Angami Naga in the jungle. The Sheli also are short two-line songs and may be sung antiphonally.<sup>2</sup>

When we go into the jungle hide no word.  
To speak all that is in the heart and be friends, is well.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Waley, *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (London, 1928), 14.  
<sup>2</sup> J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas* (London, 1921), 286.

We have never been into the forest together  
 I have never plucked wild herbs to fill my love's basket.  
 For this I am sad.

There are two main types of Dadaria—the Jorphi and the Thadi. In the Jorphi type, the first 'line' has little real connexion with the second; it is a refrain referring generally to some homely familiar object of the countryside—the creeper climbing up the wall of the house, the mango tree silhouetted against the sky, the gruel cooking in the pot. The Jorphi Dadaria is usually sung competitively; a party of boys begin and while they are singing, a party of girls discuss and prepare the reply. They continue using the Jorphi line, each side composing additional lines to rhyme with it until they are tired, and then they change the rhyme and the tune. The second line often ends with the word *dos*, 'friend', a technical device which is useful for concealing any deficiency in the rhyme.

The Thadi Dadaria is a complete short poem; it may be sung *piärke jhulania*, sentimentally and swinging to and fro, or *jhulania*, rather slowly with a dragged-out tune, in contrast to the simple *thadi*, which is sharper and more concise in its music. This type of Dadaria can also be sung a cappella, but not necessarily so; it can be shouted as a whole-hearted, delighted means of self-expression, even if there is no one to hear or answer.

There is a wide variety of tunes, and over a dozen were recorded by Walter Kaufmann.

## CHALTI BHADAUNI DADARIA

Sung at a marriage while the singers are going somewhere.

79



*Nawāre talwa bahut gahira  
Mala bhagan bhala daile  
Pāchu kar jāhira.*

*Naware pairi lagāwai reti  
Tan rahāy ki jāwai tumhār seti.*

THE new tank is very deep  
Let me first run away  
Then tell everyone.

To smooth a new anklet you need a file  
For your sake my body may stay or go.

## THADI DADARIA

80



*Umaria dumaria dumar phul ki darwājāle,  
Darwājāle bolai jhokai sitārām bangulaiyāle.  
Nahi āway. Mand piya rāja māndi lagāke :  
Dola sajāke jāthay barāth.  
Lāde baila nandiyāla nahi nake.*

FLOWER of the fig peeps out from the cover of the leaves  
So does this girl stand in her house and accepts  
    his greeting Sitaram  
He will not come. For my King is drinking, seated  
    among his friends  
But the litter is ready decorated to go for the  
    marriage  
And the loaded bullock cannot cross the river.

81



*Nahi āway. . .  
Pāne lagāy pansariya re hāy  
Lawange lagāy jara mahakat āwai.  
Aso ke amli pharela chapti  
Pāne lagāy pansariya re hāy  
Tor mukhpār daya bhitār kapti.*

HE will not come . . .  
O leaf-maker, when you prepare the *pān*

Put in a little cinnamon  
So he will come with scented mouth.

This year's tamarind is spoilt  
There is pity in your face  
But you are false within.

82



*Amāke dārla nawāke bhanja dāre Rām  
Mor patarela māyāke māre rowāy dāre.*

*Jarwāla kātai chhadike chhadi  
Mor bātala batāy de kadike kadi.*

ONE bends the mango branch  
And breaks it in the end  
Now has my love for this slim-bodied girl  
Brought me to tears.

One cuts long straight branches  
From the thorn-bush  
Now quick and straight  
Make answer to my song.

83



*Pātar munga pātar dangni  
Pātar hawai sarir  
De daibe māngani.*

*Jaisema debe jaisema lehu  
Māngani ma nahi debe paisāma lehu,*

SLENDER is the munga tree  
 Slender are its branches  
 Slender is your body  
 O give it me desirous.

However you give it me  
 I will take your body  
 If not for my desiring  
 Then give it at my purchase.

84



*Ek ped āma alag pake dār  
 Pāni budgay ye chhokri bachai re dos  
 Āy āy māro tāko ga  
 Pāni budgay ye chhokri bachai re dos.*

THE solitary mango tree  
 Cannot preserve its fruit  
 Nor can anyone save this young girl from me  
 No, not even if she tries to kill herself in water  
 No one can save her from me.

85



*Hāy hāy mor gelha patarela nāngar phāndai  
 Bhai talwa tipan khale pār hai hamāre pāle ga  
 Kātela dori ā jābe dawwa hamāre jori.*

O MY friend, my slim-bodied love  
 Is ploughing his field  
 Beside the lake where our camp is  
 O love, come to cut the creeper  
 Come, little brother, my yoke-fellow.



*Āmāla tode khāunch kahike  
Mola dagāma ye chhokri bulāwai re dos.*

*Kon ban āma phir kon ban jām  
Ye bhawara nikal gai re dos?*

There is a separation of lovers, and both regret it. The youth speaks :

She called me saying  
If you go picking mangoes  
I will come to eat them  
But it was all deceit, my friend.

His girl also speaks :

Where is the forest where the mango grows ?  
Where is the forest of jamun ?  
And where has my bumble-bee flown away, my friend ?



\* The A is sung sometimes clear sometimes a quarter-tone lower

*Nāna bailu bhala ge kāri ketahar tari ke pach had ko lai gay goy.  
Ya apan dāi ke beta janam jori mor bairi goy khadapai doli.*

Meaning—unintelligible.

## HARAUNI THADI DADARIA

88



*Darāpatera ke ghar chhaye re  
Jaunela tai to khoje jaunela pāye re  
Jaunela re dos.*

*Gorike anganāma pācha peda lim  
Gori jāthāy to patauni ganat raheb din  
Gori jathai re dos.*

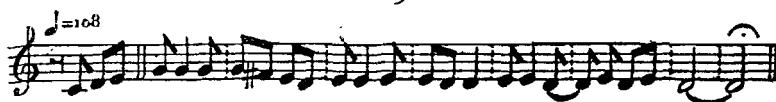
The good-wife taunts her husband who has fallen in love with a fair neighbour.

You thatched the roof with leaf and branch  
What you searched for, that you found  
O that you found, my friend.

There are five lemon trees  
In that fair beauty's garden  
But that fair one is going away  
Amuse yourself in counting up the days  
Till she return—that fair one's going away.

## JHULANIA JHORPI DADARIA

89



*Nahi āwai. . .*  
*Chan chan channāke dār*  
*Chhote supāri pān*  
*Āma ghawud lorai hāy re.*  
*Khayela dudh pargai*  
*Paray ke dudk mā.*

A girl is leaving home, and is sorry for it. *Channa* pulse is held to be beautiful as pearls.

O the *channa* pulse  
 O the little *supāri* and *pān*  
 With its own fruit the mango bends.  
 Every day I had (my mother's) milk  
 But I listened to others  
 And came into sorrow.

90



*Gāle gāle . . .*  
*Bās ke to lāthi tor chāndike gathān dos dārike.*  
*Milauna to āmāke āthān*  
*Tor boli sadakale sunāwai re dos.*  
 Your stick is made of bamboo  
 And it has silver bands  
 The meeting of friends is (sweet as) mango pickle  
 I hear your voice in the street, O friend.

## PIARKE JHULANIA JHORPI DADARIA

91



*Bhāt ke khawaiya bāsila nahi khāy  
 Saikal ke to chadhaiya mor karela pāidal nahi jay re dos.  
 Gaye bajār leyela lota  
 Ghar baitho khela le āpan beta.*

A girl and boy taunt one another. In the first verse she declares that she can do better than him. In the second, he replies accusing her of bringing home a bastard from the bazaar.

He who has eaten rice does not care for stale *bāsi*  
 The cyclist does not care to walk on foot, O friend!

You went to the bazaar and brought home a pot  
 So sit in your house and play with the baby.

92

WITHOUT a sarai tree near by  
 The saja withers  
 Without your sweet singing  
 My love dries up  
 My bird.

The forest poets call the saja tree the husband of the sarai, for they often are found together and to the lay eye are not readily distinguished. The trunk and leaves of the sarai are smooth and fine, those of the saja are rough and hard. Saja wood dries more quickly than sarai after it is cut.

93

You have washed the *kājal* from your eyes  
 You have lost, O bird  
 The hours of dalliance.

*Nandlāli*, the time of care-free dalliance and sport, must be exchanged for the burdens of life in a husband's house. *Kājal* is the lamp-black used to emphasize the beauty of a girl's eyes.

94

THE wind takes the mahua flowers away  
 And leaves the fruit behind  
 Sleep will take our friends at midnight  
 Then come come to love me.

95

WOMAN: You asked me to make *khichri*  
 But now we are lying together  
 You can only show your teeth in smiles.

MAN: You bid me lie with you, but what am I to do?  
 The bed is soft, soft is the pillow  
 O Rani, face towards me, let us lie breast to breast.

*Khichri* is a mixture of rice and pulse cooked together: it is sometimes used to suggest the mingling of male and female in the consummation of love and is the principal dish at the marriage feast.

96

THE sugar-cane is just a cubit high  
 But soon it will be taller than a man  
 Boy, do not be anxious  
 You will soon be grown and ready.

97

I WENT to fish and damned the stream  
 I jumped the fence and broke the bamboo  
 What happened to you, girl  
 What happened in the river?

I WENT to the bazaar and bought a necklace  
 But you can't get a pretty girl with money  
 What's the matter with you, boy?  
 You understand nothing, what's the matter with you, boy?

SHE is fishing  
 With her net she is fishing  
 My love, your life  
 Is going in that girl.

IT is all you can do  
 To fill your own sacks and load them  
 How can you look after me?  
 All you can do  
 Is to make your own body smart.

YOUR throat looks bare without its beads  
 My bed is lonely without my girl.

THERE is grain in my house, there is grinding to do  
 But to satisfy my eyes I have come to look at you.

SING, sing, O girl, as you swing to and fro  
 O your arrow of stone! That bordered dhoti becomes  
 you, O friend.

HE bent the mango branch and twisted it  
 I have wept for desire of my slender-waisted love.

WASH your feet in a metal pot  
 The good man does good and the rascal breaks hearts.

106

IN a big house there is a little door  
 The Raja comes to visit it on any excuse.

107

THE black bird talks at midnight  
 She must speak, what else can she do?  
 For her heart is longing for him.

108

HER cloth is down to her knees; her hair falls to her waist  
 Wait my Raja wait for me. I'll go with you.

109

ONLY with a rope can you draw water from a well  
 I told you 'Don't don't'. But now I am pregnant.

110

THE silver ring is worthless if it is turned to copper  
 Another man's wife is useless to you.

111

IN the Urai jungle the rain comes down in torrents  
 If you would enjoy yourself it must be before you're married.

112

WHEN times are hard you have to sell your ear-rings  
 Don't get angry girl with me, for now it is my turn.

113

O REAPER, you are letting the sheaves fall to the ground  
 How I desire that slender waist of yours.

114

TELL me now once for all, open your heart to me  
 Is there some other man whom you desire?

115

SHE is throwing out the water and catching little fish  
 Keep a watch on your cattle, they are scattering everywhere.

116

I THREW twelve stones at you  
 Come out on some excuse with a pot in your hand.

117

THE ring I gave you  
 The *phundara* you gave to me  
 When we look at them  
 They remind us of each other.

The *phundara* is an ornament for tying the hair : it consists of balls of red, green and blue wool held together by coloured cords.

118

THEY threw away the silver ring  
 What can our parents do if our minds are made up ?

119

WHAT is yours is mine and what is mine is yours  
 You pay with your sweat, I pay with my blood.

120

THE gun is crooked, the bullets are soft  
 Though others think you mad, how sweet are your words to me.

121

ONLY on a soft stone can you clean your feet  
 Friends of my mother's village, how I long for you !

122

SHE was but a cubit tall  
 Today the sugar-cane is high as a man  
 With his hands above his head  
 She was my friend from childhood  
 And I have made her wise in love.

123

You never made a garland of wild berries  
 Once love has gone how unhappy you are.

124

If your mind is sad it is as joyless -  
 As a flute that has lost its wax.

125

You cannot catch prawns without a fine net  
 You cannot win a girl without a go-between.

126

Boy there is no rain and there'll be no rice  
 Come let's go to work in the mine.

This Dadaria comes from Balaghat District where many  
 of the aborigines are now working in the manganese mines.

127

In a field of wheat you can scarce see a single flower  
 The curse of a girl's sorrow is always on the head of a boy.

128

THE garden fence is very thick  
 Don't be afraid ; I'll bring your turban hidden in my pot.

The meaning of this Dadaria is that a youth has been  
 visiting his girl and has left his turban behind in the house.  
 He is very much alarmed lest it will be found and thus betray  
 his presence there but the girl assures him that she will hide it  
 in her water-pot and take it down to him at the well or on the  
 roadside.

129

THE lovely girl is pounding rice with a pestle  
 She is his own wife now  
 What further need has he to shoot his arrows of allurement ?

This is a rather cynical comment on married life. A  
 youth has married a most beautiful girl. In the old days

he made love-charms for her; he played the flute near her house; he took every means to win her. But now she belongs to him and there is no need for him to bother any longer.

130

A YOUNG mare won't let herself be saddled  
Your jealous husband won't let you smile at me.

131

THE long-nosed rat wanders all over the new house  
You wander everywhere after me.

132

IF you go into the river, it whirls you round  
I saw her in my dream, but I woke and the bed was empty.

133

WHEN you put golden oil on your body  
I am filled with love. Come along with me.

134

THE roof is broad and steeply slopes  
With thirsty lips I begged for a drop of water.

135

LOOKING, looking, my eyes broke open  
I could not say a word and she has gone away.

136

EXCEPT to your house, where should I go?  
But let your tongue move a little or I'll go away.

137

How close is the bamboo to its parts  
If you can't talk to me, what can we be to one another?

138

THE message of your Dadaria has sunk into my mind  
My bird, I have become a Bairagi and gone into the jungle.

139

IT is evening and the black-breasted quail has flown away  
 Let us go now, my hunter, for it is very late.

140

THE houses are burnt, the place is deserted  
 What shall I say when he sees the sari you gave me?  
 • The houses are burnt, the place is deserted  
 Tell him your brother gave you the bordered sari.

141

WITH his stick he can bring down bel fruit from the  
 tree, my Gajabel  
 Who can give oil for your marigold-beautiful hair?

142

THE bullock wears a bell, the buffalo a clapper  
 Do not be angry, I am still a raw girl.

143

PIGEONS are feeding on the hillside  
 Don't smile at me, you are only a baby.

144

THEY are eating mangoes; the one within is restless  
 You must keep up love by oiling your beautiful hair.

The villagers interpret this song as meaning that a pregnant girl is standing near a mango tree, but none of her former admirers now engaged in eating the mangoes bother to offer her any. She is filled with a *dohada*, or longing for the fruit, which she interprets as meaning that the child within her womb desires it. The moral is that a girl must not neglect her beauty if she wishes to be admired.

145

A DRIED-UP lemon gives no juice  
 My husband says not a word and my mind is withering.

146

My ears are embarrassed by these golden rings  
 And if my bridegroom is impotent what use are they?

147

How clean the house is; it looks like the sky  
 But it brings nothing but bitterness to me.

These three songs are complaints by a young wife about<sup>o</sup>  
 her impotent husband. A fine house and golden ornaments  
 are worthless if the dried-up lemon has no juice.

148

Boy

YOUR bangles press you till they hurt  
 And your quick movements bind a boy to you.

GIRL

I walked along with swinging arms  
 And knew not what you meant  
 But now how sad I feel.

149

Boy

THEY are breaking stones  
 For the new high-way  
 How shall I send my message?

GIRL

How hard it is to walk  
 On the pointed stones  
 Send my present secretly.

150

PUT down your bundle on the ground  
 Traveller, take me in your lap  
 Take me with you on your journey  
 For I love my traveller.

151

THERE is white water on the hill  
 How suddenly  
 As I was drawing water  
 He made me his bed.

152

As the anklets jingle *jhankār*  
 Follow their music  
 And come to me.

153

My stick is caught in the mango tree  
 And all the branches shake  
 But of the stick there is no sign.

154

THE swing is swinging  
 And there sits my Gajabel  
 Take me in your swing  
 And let me ride with you.

As the creeper goes round and round a tree so does the Gajabel twine herself round the heart of her lover.

155

ON the bamboo stick is an iron point  
 Friendship is like mango pickle  
 Your words, friend, are like an arrow  
 That strikes my heart and there remains.

The symbols of the bamboo stick with its iron point and the mango pickle represent the mixture and combination of things as two friends are mingled and combined together in their friendship.

156

ONE wire two wires  
 One music from the two  
 In her lap are a goose and a dove  
 She loves them equally.

This is one of the rare songs about twins. The wires are those of a sacred *bāna* fiddle which blend together to make a melody. By these aborigines twins are not usually regarded as unlucky.

157

*Khar khar* ripples the river  
 And its sixteen streams  
 Make the haldi climb  
 On the golden girl.

The word we have translated golden is *kanch-kuwāri*, pure and virgin as gold.

158

## GIRL

You have embraced me but why did you shake me?  
 Why did you wake me out of my sleep?

## Boy

I am but a *pihu*-bird  
 And I am bending low above you.

## LOVE SONGS



## LOVE SONGS

THE symbolism of the songs, which is in some ways their most obvious and important character, is simply the symbolism of every day set to music. The Gond and Pardhan actually do think and talk in symbols all their lives. A symbol is the readiest cure for embarrassment, and can smooth over a business transaction or a hitch in one's love-making with equal facility. So when the emissaries go on the delicate business of arranging a girl's betrothal, they do not state their purpose directly, but say they have come for merchandise, or to quench their thirst with water, or seek a gourd in which to put their seed.

Similarly, the whole intricate absorbing business of daily love is carried on with symbols. Women by the well ask each other, 'Did you have your supper last night?' 'Are you weary from yesterday's rice-husking?' Men speak of digging up their fields, getting water from the well, entering a house. Not only the solicitations of the seducer but the domestic arrangements of wife and husband cannot be decently conducted without a verbal stratagem.

A good deal of the symbolism is obvious enough, and we get further evidence for its interpretation from dreams, omens and riddles. These interpretations, however, are by no means straightforward. For example, someone dreams of a mango and the next day his wife gives birth to a male child: henceforth in that village a mango will stand as the symbol of a boy.

Other symbols are connected with folk-tales and local traditions. Some, which might be expected to depend on obvious sexual associations, actually refer to quite different matters. A girl is symbolised by a bird because she is *panchi*, winged, apt to fly away and desert her lover. She is *channa-dāl*, gram pulse, which divides in two and reveals the beauty inside. Woman is a cow, not for the obvious reasons, but because women like cows wander scattered across the countryside. When a woman goes to meet a lover, she goes like a cow by devious and secret routes and is never caught; but a man goes directly, like a buffalo, and is soon discovered. It is woman, not man, who appears as a snake in the songs. The

conventional phallic meaning is lost beneath an accumulation of legends about the snake-damsel and the poison-maid.

But, of course, a large number of the symbols are just what we would expect and may be paralleled in Western and Chinese poetry as well as in the songs of other Indian tribes.

In Chinese poetry, says Arthur Waley, images are used directly. There is no 'as if' or 'like', but the comparison is 'stated on the same footing as the facts narrated.'<sup>1</sup>

The method of this Chinese poem—

On the hill grows the cherry tree  
And lovely are its flowers;  
I have seen my lord,  
And splendid is his dress.<sup>2</sup>

—can be paralleled by many in this collection. But the rule here is not absolute: comparisons are sometimes emphasised by introductory phrases.

BREAD on the pan and rice in the pot  
Are quickly ready  
And quickly burnt  
The boy goes to the river  
With quick expectant steps.  
  
The girl has combed her hair  
And fixed her *bindia*  
She goes to the river to see her love  
She must go very quickly  
Or his love will burn away.

The *bindia* is a very attractive silver band worn across the front of the head and generally attached to the large shields, the *dhar*, put in the ears.

COME, boys, and let us play,  
Life is only for two days  
Take whichever girl you like  
Life is only for two days

<sup>1</sup> A. Waley, *The Book of Songs* (London, 1937), 13.  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Her hips sway like a young bamboo  
 Life is only for two days  
 His body wriggles like a rice-stalk  
 Life is only for two days.

A girl is often compared to a bamboo, a use which is also found among the Uraon<sup>1</sup>.

On the high hills the bamboos grow  
 From a bamboo the blue bow is made  
 The shooting arrows are a spray of water  
 The gun is fired many rounds.

A girl is a bamboo, say the Pardhan, 'because her waist is slender and sways like one.'

In a Santal folk-tale a bamboo grows out of the grave of a girl who has been murdered, and from it a Jogi makes a flute of great sweetness. Bamboos are often used in the construction of marriage-booths and small bamboo lids are placed below the bride and bridegroom when they sit for the ceremonial greeting of their relatives.

The Gond and Baiga indeed personify the bamboo as a girl, as Basmoti Kaniya or Bas Kaniya. Basmoti Kaniya fed the little Nanga Baiga with her milk and gave him a golden axe. According to one story Nanga Baiga and Nanga Baigin were born under a clump of bamboos. It was from the shavings of a bamboo that mankind were born. A curious tale about the origin of seed allots to the bamboo an obvious sexual function. Nanga Baiga was taking seed to the forest and on the way met Basmoti Kaniya the bamboo and asked her to keep the seed with her for the night. She put all the seed in her belly, and in the morning Nanga Baiga cut the bamboo and, leaving the head and feet behind, carried the belly full of seeds to his clearing. Another version is that Basmoti turned herself into a bamboo for shame when her own father gave her his seed.

An unusual application of the bamboo imagery is found in a Lao poem<sup>2</sup>—

If the arms and the legs of the lover  
 Hollow about my tender flesh  
 Such furrows as a liana leaves upon  
 The tree she loves,

<sup>1</sup> Archer, op. cit., 108.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by E. Powys Mathers.

Surely the points of my breasts  
 On the breast of my lover  
 Shall be as sharpened bamboo branches  
 Piercing an elephant.

161

O GIRL, you torment me, you are so deceiving  
 And you stand there beautiful as the moon  
 Yet as a deer is snared and killed  
 So will I snare you, for I have caught a thousand so.

162

HE saw ripe lemons on her tree  
 How could he control his hunger?  
 He gave her *khir* for them  
 With *khir* he filled her belly.

'Lemons' is a simile for the breast, not a very common one, for lemons are not common in the Maikal Hills. The last two lines of the song refer to intercourse and a resulting pregnancy. *Khir* is a sweet made of rice, milk and sugar.

163

BRING ash, bring chaff  
 Come to clean your bangles  
 See how they shine  
 When I have cleaned them  
 Put them on your shining arms  
 When I have cleaned them.

164

THEY are cutting the 'bewar, they cut down all the jungle  
 I can hear them shouting, they are cutting all the jungle  
 O girl, your husband is away in the bewar  
 Roast some mahua and take it to your husband  
 You are my *lālbhāji* and I your *jāmundāra*.

*Bewar* is the word used for the axe-cultivation of the Baiga: it is also used, as here, for the clearings of axe and fire in the forest. *Lālbhāji* and *jāmundāra* are the names of ceremonial friendships. To call one's beloved 'red spinach' or a

'koilar flower' (used as a vegetable) or 'kader fruit' is considered entirely appropriate by the Gond and Pardhan, for 'love is eating.' A girl says, 'How I wish I could eat him!' 'When a girl has a man she eats him, for he goes into her stomach.' It is notable that such terms of endearment as, for example, Chaucer uses for 'sweet Alisoun', are also connected with the imagery of eating—'honey-comb', 'fair bird', 'sweet cinnamon'.

165

THE dark shadows of the mango grove  
What did you say to me  
In the mangò shàdow's?  
Take me away, my love  
And make me partner of your life.

The mango is one of the 'royal trees' of India, sharing this honourable distinction with the pipal (*ficus religiosa*), the bar (*ficus indica*) and the siras (*acacia speciosa*).<sup>1</sup> In Indian folklore the child-giving mango is a common theme, and occurs several times in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* where all references are given. Crooke records a legend that the first mangoes grew in the garden of Ravana in Lanka and Hanuman was so delighted with the flavour of them that he threw some of the seeds into the sea and they floated across the channel and took root in Indian soil.

In the Maikal Hills the mango season is a time of excitement and delight. Parties of young men and girls go out into the forest and spend days enjoying the most delightful of picnics, eating little except the fresh wild mangoes and drinking the water of the mountain streams. Mango leaves strung on a cord are tied round the marriage-booth: the leaves are also used for sprinkling holy water and sometimes for applying haldi to bride and bridegroom. Many tribes still celebrate ceremonially the first eating of the mangoes, and it is greatly to be hoped that these beautiful trees will remain free and open to the people for ever and not be farmed out to strangers in order to produce revenue for Government.

<sup>1</sup> Penzer, *The Ocean of Story*, ii, 118.

As you climb the hill  
 Even your lover's voice you cannot hear  
 You are panting so loudly  
 Some are breaking small branches  
 Some are plucking leaves  
 As you climb the hill.

This Baiga Karma is one of those by which lovers send their messages to each other. By a certain emphasis or intonation it is possible to suggest a meeting place—where small branches are to be broken or the place where one usually picks leaves. The images of climbing the hill and panting are, of course, sexual.

My fruit, my food  
 How good that you have come  
 In my hand I have hidden  
 Some coconut for you  
 If you were mine  
 I would always play with you  
 But how can I spend all my youth  
 In the play of love with you.

The expression that we have translated 'my fruit, my food', is in the original *more kundru-karela*. The kundru is a jungle fruit and the karela a bitter-tasting vegetable which is very popular. The phrase kundru-karela is often used as a term of affection. Terms of endearment current between Gond and Pardhan lovers are many and varied. For men there are such words as Raja, king; Baihya, madman; Sathi, companion or friend; Piara, darling; Chaila and Rassia, flirt. For women there are—Kaleja, liver or heart; Pran, life; Prit and Piari, love or darling; Maya, beloved; Chiraiya, bird; Parewa, dove; Koel; Sua, parrot; Balam, playmate; Prem ki Chiraiya, love-bird; Popsa, lung; Gondaphul, marigold; Mere Kaleja ke Kutka, bit of my liver; Amabel; Kelapan, plantain-leaf; Rani, queen; Phohi, the peacock-feather float used in fishing, hence something attractive, enchanteress; Hira, diamond. Some of these can, of course, be used indifferently for both sexes.

If such terms appear extravagant, we may remember such expressions in Elizabethan England as 'Piggesnie'—pig's eye, or 'My mouse, my nobs, and coney sweet' and many others.

## 168

You have brought pearly beads  
And tied them in your hair  
But now stop dancing in my eyes  
Or I will tie you round my neck.

The Gond often speak of a beloved girl, or even part of her body, as 'dancing in their eyes'. A girl may be so beautiful that 'she drags the eyes out of your head'.

## 169

LITTLE girl, you talk a lot  
I'll take and throw you on the ground  
Clasping you in my arms  
And who is going to know about it?

## 170

GIVE me the flower-stool, girl  
I am but a stranger  
All the house is yours.

## DESCRIPTIONS

171

How tightly  
Your new jacket  
Fits your lovely body.

172

You are going to a far distant land  
Give me the cloth that hides your breast  
Morning and evening  
I will take it out and look at it.

173

THEN it was noon  
Now star-time  
Where are you going  
A basket on your head?

174

THE Palace of the Raja glitters in the sun  
*Dipē dipē dika re!*  
Inside is silver and gold, bright as the fire  
*Dipē dipē dika re!*

175

THE plough and yoke are in the forest  
The bullock is yet in the womb of the cow  
The ploughman is still unborn  
But the girl who takes him food  
Is standing in the field  
The Mother gave no grain, no wealth  
The Mother gave no child in her womb  
The ploughman is still unborn  
But the girl with his food  
Is standing in the field.

BLACK, black, very black  
I'll plough my garden  
With my two black wives  
Black, black, what a wretched colour  
There's a fair brown girl  
Picking herbs on the bank of the stream.

This is a Jhumar song sung by the Lamana gypsies.

## RED BEAUTY

177

HER red cloth is like the lightning  
When first I saw you my life ached for you  
O proud girl, what shall I do with you?  
My enemy  
Where did that red cloth come from?  
Where did the gay-coloured jacket come from?  
As soon as I saw you  
My life ached for you, my enemy.

178

WHY let your heart burn?  
Why not rest and sleep  
Spreading your red cloth  
Clasping the earth in your arms?

179

YOU say, 'When I've combed my hair  
And put red powder in the parting'  
Every day you trick me so  
But tomorrow I will myself come to your house.

180

YOU of the red jacket  
And shining armlets  
Why did you enchant me  
With the magic of your eyes  
My mind bids me go  
But my heart is sad  
I stand in the midst of water  
And yet I die of thirst.

The colour red frequently appears in Indian poetry of every kind. It is said that its popularity among the Hindus is due to the fact that it is the colour of blood, and that the *sendur* or vermillion powder, so often used in Hindu worship,

on the parting of a woman's hair and in marriage ceremonies, is a blood-substitute. The vermillion is part of what is known as the Sohag, the lucky gift which is given at the marriage of a Hindu girl in parts of India and which also includes *kunku* or red powder, and *mahawar* or red balls of cotton wool.

But the aborigines of the Maikal Hills do not use either *sendur* or *kunku* unless they have come into contact with civilization. They are not accustomed to throw red-coloured water at Holi, nor do they use red in their marriage ceremonies. Yet there is no doubt that they, like the Hindus, are very fond of this colour, and it is said that a red sari or a red turban at once awakes desire. It is possible that among a people who have no need of a blood-substitute, since they offer actual blood in sacrifice, the affection for this colour is purely a practical one. The saris supplied by the great Cotton Mills to this part of India are generally of only two kinds, white and red. The majority of Gond and Pardhan women wear white, but when a girl is enterprising enough to buy a red sari or fortunate enough to have a lover who will give her one, she at once becomes an object of excited admiration.

## LONELINESS AND LONGING

181

RAJA, my heart is mad for you  
I have gone mad for you  
But you have left the warm bed in my house  
Where will you find such warmth outside ?  
You have left me all alone  
You would eat roots and fruit outside  
Come, my madman, let us go together to the forest.

Green is the green hill  
Yellow are the bamboos  
Green is the kalindar creeper  
Karanda flowers are in my hair  
Where in the forest will I find my Raja ?  
My heart burns for him  
Where in the forest will I find my madman ?

182

If you go to the forest  
All the branches and creepers will be yours  
But who could have poured the oil  
On your curly hair, my bird ?

A girl thinks of her lover who has not been to see her for some time. He is so handsome that every girl ('all the branches and creepers') are bound to love him. But she suspects that some special lover has poured oil (oil with a remote association with marriage and the domestic rite of cooking) on his curly hair.

183

YOUR eye-brows are like sesamum  
Like the striped seed the parting of your hair  
Your body is soft and lustrous as a snake  
Then why, O why, my fair  
Are you still without a child ?

The 'striped seed' is the *ghungchi*, a black seed with a straight white stripe, a good simile for the enchanting line of a girl's hair-parting. In another song this parting is compared to a red centipede.

184

In the midst of the river grows a pipal thick with leaves  
 Among the leaves monkeys are hiding  
 O my love when will I meet you  
 And hold you close amid the leaves.

185

You play the flute  
 Of young bamboo  
 How tenderly you handle  
 The stops with your five fingers  
 Putting it in your mouth  
 Bringing the wind out from within  
 How is it you cannot hear  
 Your loved yoke-fellow?

186

How the clouds thundered  
 In the dark night  
 Snakes and a tigress  
 But for love of you  
 I was not afraid  
 I would desert my own life  
 For love of you  
 I brought a silver ball  
 For love of you  
 When I put on my coat  
 Remembrance comes  
 I was not afraid  
 Of snakes and a tigress  
 In the dark.

187

In the tobacco-patch  
 A hen wanders lonely  
 When I don't see you  
 My heart wanders.

188

THE pots are full of curds  
But the cow-shed is empty  
Dry are the udders of the buffaloes  
Where is she hiding?  
*In my mind I wonder*  
I ask in my heart  
Where is my beautiful love hiding?

189

LET me remain with you  
For love my tears flow  
The house is no more a house  
The forest is no longer forest  
Every hill becomes a mountain  
Without you by me  
Take me with you  
For love my tears flow.

## THE ARROWS OF DESIRE

190

His teeth are white as curds  
His eyes are full of sin  
His face is beautiful as a wild creeper  
His eyes are full of sin  
I am only a bit of cucumber  
He is the ghee  
To make it palatable  
He is the arrow  
But he has not destroyed me  
His arrow has become the pillar of my house.

In a man white teeth, white clothes, a white turban are admired. Women say, 'His turban is white as a mushroom.'

191

THE deer is grazing in her garden  
Someone is creeping under the tamarind  
Someone is creeping under the mango  
Brother get ready your bow and arrow  
Which brother cries, Shoot shoot  
Which brother fires the arrow?  
Little brother cries, Shoot shoot  
Big brother fires the arrow.

192

MY bed is a bullock with a sounding bell  
But when you leave me it is quiet  
Ignorant ploughman, when I first bathed  
You were to come in ten days' time  
Instead you took a month  
And yet my Raja, though you are away  
From me every day  
Your memory stands like a pillar.

The bed is compared to a bullock with a bell round its neck because when it is shared it is never silent. The girl singer

has arranged that when she is mature (the reference to her first bath is to the menarche) her lover will come to visit her.

193

BEAUTY itself has touched you  
When I look at you  
Like an arrow  
A love-charm strikes my heart.

194

ACRANE will always be a crane  
Once a crane pecked at a pearl  
Which in its throat became a thorn  
Panting with pain the bird died.

The song is interpreted as meaning that a man may marry a beautiful girl but she may yet become a thorn within him.

195

O FAITHLESS thorn  
He has my heart no longer  
Yet for his sake I no more see  
Mother or brother or any friends  
O faithless thorn.

The thorn in this Baigani Karma is a *chhindi* thorn which pricks but leaves no mark. So although the love of the singer's faithless admirer has pricked her and though the wound stings and burns, the thorn does not remain in the flesh or in her mind.

196

SHE went to pick brinjals  
A black thorn pierced her  
She went to pick brinjals  
The black heifer pierced her  
Bring a knife, bring a thorn  
To remove the thorn from her  
Run folks, run to remove it from her.

ALONG the road, the road  
I came in love with you  
And a thorn pierced me  
But though I came in love  
You do not care for me.

To be pricked by a thorn is considered a bad omen by the Uraon for 'it implies a wound which may mean a loss of blood and a corresponding loss of vitality'.<sup>1</sup> To the Pardhan, however, the thorn is probably simply the sharp prick of desire.

Lust has no ears; He's sharp as thorn;  
And fretful, carries Hay in's horn. (Herrick)

<sup>1</sup> Archer, op. cit., 160.

## THE LAMP

198

A LITTLE bird is flying round her head  
Its wings fall over her eyes  
Look! Look! and see, her lover said  
But she replied, In the dark how can I see?  
Where can I find a lamp  
Where can I find a wick  
Where can I find the oil?  
I will give you a golden lamp  
I will give you a silver wick  
I will give you linseed oil.

199

PUT lanterns in your earthen shrine  
Get a glass bottle  
Make a wick of your loin-cloth  
Keep the oil burning all night long.

This Karma is a taunt song made by a woman on a poor man who has asked her to his house. He is so poor that in his little mud hut he has no light and she cruelly reminds him of this.

200

HER youth cries aloud  
As she walks along the path  
There is vermillion in her hair  
And gold rings in her ears  
So she of the slender waist  
Goes drunken with her youth  
Her cloth is thin as fish-scales  
Her jacket is of silk  
But girl, your Lord is impotent  
Why not run away with me?  
For a lantern needs a wick  
The wick cries out for oil  
The eyes long for sleep  
Youth seeks the play of love.

In another version,

The lamp thirsts for oil  
The blind man begs for his two eyes.

201

O MOTHER, what am I to do  
With my forbidden love?  
The moth does not realise the lamp  
Is fire and dies.

A girl loves a man 'handsome as a lamp', but he is of the same clan and so forbidden her.

202

IN Kuar we were friends  
In Kartik he became the lantern of my house  
O bring back my lighted lamp  
Or in a flash I'll send my life away  
Write, write a letter, send it to the city  
But there is no news, no message  
O find my lighted lamp and bring him here  
Or in a flash I'll send my life away.

The lamp, which frequently occurs in these songs as a sexual symbol, is used in the same way in some of the Pahari paintings of eighteenth century Kangra and Jammu. One of the Mukarni (a sort of riddle) of the ancient Urdu poet Khusran identifies the lamp and the bridegroom.

He passed a sleepless night with me;  
But he left me in the morning;  
His separation breaks my heart;  
Is it the bridegroom? No, friend, the lamp.

The idea is to be found in Donne in the lovely lines:

Now, as in Tullia's tomb, one lamp burned clear,  
Unchanged for fifteen hundred year,  
May these love-lamps we here enshrine  
In warmth, light, lasting, equal the divine.

The wick, the oil, the bowl of the lamp all have their place in the symbolism. To the modern European who may never have seen a lamp of the old type, the imagery may not appeal. But it is true and appropriate in villages which use the ancient model. A girl is 'pretty as an ornamented lamp'.

## THE VILLAGE WELL

203

IN a great forest  
How grand is a great tree  
But by the well  
The slender bamboo is pretty  
This orphan girl  
Is pretty  
Even in her step-mother's house.

204

O WATER-GIRL ! with tinkling anklets  
That sounded under the dark mango tree  
O water-girl ! your pot of bronze  
Is shining in the setting sun  
Your lips are dry and thirsty as my heart  
O water-girl ! with swaying hips  
Go to bring water from the lonely well  
Fear not the dark, I'll go with you  
My heart is thirsty, water-girl.

205

COOL in summer's heat  
Warm in winter's cold  
Is the water in the well  
And the body of my love.

206

IN my garden is a well.  
'All round it hang the mangoes  
How deep and cool my well is !  
But you are deeper far in love  
The sun beats down and you are thirsty  
But you care not for my water  
You know the deep love of the heart.

207

FROM Malewa Hill you are bringing water  
 How musical your walk is!  
 But wait: soon I will humble you  
 On Malewa Hill is the salt earth  
 That the deer come to lick  
 O garden girl, will you too be  
 Salt earth for many deer?  
 From Malewa Hill you are bringing water  
 How musical your walk is!

These are the reflections of a man as he watches a girl who has rejected him. *Thamkat rengna*, which we have translated 'walking musically', refers both to the rhythm of the walk and the music of the girl's ornaments which sound as she goes along.

208

O my love, when I see your beauty  
 I laugh aloud for joy  
 You have put a pitcher on your head  
 You are carrying a basket on your hip  
 I look back to see if you will come or no  
 O beautiful love of mine.

209

How shapely is the pitcher on its stand  
 How sweet my water-girl down by the well.

It is always said that there is no place where a girl looks more beautiful than by the well. Her upright and graceful carriage is emphasized when she places a heavy pot on her head.

210

THIS is the way of love  
 Tie the neck of a pot with cord  
 Throw it down the well  
 And bring up water to quench your thirst  
 It goes down deep  
 It goes down deep  
 And brings up water.

'A flower', say the Pardhan, 'cannot live without water :  
nor can a girl', and 'A tree cannot grow without water, nor  
can love'.

211

Do not send me  
To fetch water  
For I fear the well  
And its deep sound  
Like that of a cloud.

212

As one without a bucket  
Looks down into the well  
And feels more thirsty still  
For seeing the water  
O lovely girl, your language  
Is of another country  
And you do not understand.

## THE WINDS OF LOVE

213

THE wind sends waves across the field  
The pot shakes, the pan shakes  
The girl shakes as she cooks  
The rice-water falls down  
And the oil-pan receives it  
The wind sends waves across the field  
The mortar shakes, the pestle shakes  
The girl shakes as she husks the rice  
The rice-water falls down  
And the winnowing-fan receives it.  
The wind sends waves across the field.

214

LOOK at me with the strong eyes of youth  
In the cold days the trees are flowering  
The wind blows among the hills  
Bending the tree-tops  
Take my hand, come with me  
For you have conquered me  
With the strong eyes of youth.

Compare the Lao poem, translated by E. Powys Mathers.

When the tempest of a boy's love  
Comes up about us  
Suddenly  
Our thoughts and our blue and orange scarves  
'Are whirled away together.  
Who has not seen  
A great wind drive the orchids  
And birds together from a tree  
In a coloured storm?

215

THE love of a man  
 Passes like a motor car  
 Passes like the wind  
 Her youth sits in tears  
 As the love of men  
 Goes by her like the wind  
 Goes by her like a motor car.

216

*Jhirmit jhirmit*, little brother  
 The rain comes down from the king of the clouds  
 In the place where the cows are resting  
 Green has grown the dubi grass  
*Jhirmit jhirmit*, little brother  
 The rain comes down from the king of the clouds  
 The bison are feeding on the green dubi grass.

217

How can I tell the love I have for you?  
 At midnight my life burns  
 Before my eyes in a dream I see my love  
 In July the rain falls *rinhim rinhim*  
 But in August it is deep and silent as a river  
 So when I desire you  
 Water flows from my eyes  
 As a deep and silent river.

The wind and rain are widely used in the poetry of the world as emblems of the act of love. There is a charming poem by Herrick to the Western Wind.

Sweet Western Wind, whose luck it is,  
 (Made rivall with the aire)  
 To give Perenna's lip a kisse,  
 And fan her wanton haire.

Bring me but one, Ile promise thee,  
 Instead of common showers,  
 Thy wings shall be embalm'd by me,  
 And all beset with flowers.

Cotton's poem 'Laura Sleeping' has the same theme.

Winds, whisper gently whilst she sleeps,  
And fan her with your cooling wings;  
Whilst she her drops of beauty weeps  
From pure and yet-unrivalled springs.

Glide over beauty's field, her face,  
To kiss her lip and cheek be bold,  
But with a calm and stealing pace,  
Neither too rude, nor yet too cold.

Play in her beams, and crisp her hair,  
With such a gale as wings soft love,  
And with so sweet, so rich an air,  
As breathes from the Arabian grove.

The rain, with which the idea of wind is closely connected, was associated in the minds of the earlier poets of Europe with the descent of Jove upon Danae. Take for example the poem by Strode quoted in *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*.

I saw fair Chloris walk alone,  
Whilst feathered rain came softly down,  
And Jove descended from his tower  
To court her in a silver shower.

Fletcher also tells how,  
Danae in a brazen tower  
Where no love was, loved a shower.

W. G. Archer has given some beautiful poems from Bihar which show that, because the falling rain is a poignant image of the male act, the rains are necessarily a period of sexual strain.

June is the month of parting, friend  
The sky glowers with gloom  
Leaping and reeling the god rains  
And my sweet budding breasts are wet.  
All my friends sleep with their husbands  
But my own husband is a cloud in another land.

THEY sleep together on the naked ground  
Over them the wind blows  
Over them pass the waves of the wind.

PLAY without fear  
 Play, dwellers in the jungle  
 Over you the sun passes like a wave  
 In the forest the clitoris-bird is feeding  
 The herdsman drives out his cow  
 There the deer are grazing  
 The herdsman's girl drives out her cow  
 There the deer are grazing  
 Ah fresh as new leaves of ganja  
 Like a wave the sunlight bathes you.

The *titi* or clitoris-bird (probably the Red-wattled Lapwing) is the subject of several folk-tales generally on the lines of a human girl who, finding herself without adequate sexual equipment, persuades the bird to lend her its clitoris and never returns it.

The Gond and Baiga have never, of course, seen the sea but they have opportunities of watching the surface of lake or river stirred into little waves by the breeze, while the passing of the wind over a great field of corn produces waves not unlike those of the ocean. The wave with its swinging movement is a natural sexual symbol and is used frequently in the songs. This symbolism is not unknown to classical Hindu literature. In the *Katha Sarit Sagara* the dancing girl, Sundari, dances like a wave of the sea of beauty tossed up by the wind of youth.<sup>1</sup> A merchant's lovely daughter, Sikhara, is 'like a wave of the sea of love's insolence' and carries the hero off his feet.<sup>2</sup> Of another girl it is said that 'like a wave of the sea she was full of beauty.'<sup>3</sup>

A poem by Felltham (1661) makes an even more direct comparison.

The waving sea can with such flood  
 Bathe some high palace that hath stood  
 Far from the main up in the river:  
 O think not then but love can do  
 As much, for that's an ocean too,  
 That flows not every day, but ever.

<sup>1</sup> Penzer, v, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, v, 199.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, viii, 13.

## BEES AND HONEY

220

THE lotus blossoms in the lake  
Its scent goes to the sky  
Two bees fly down  
The scent, O love, went to the sky,  
And two bees flew down.

221

THE rain is pouring down  
The lotus blooms on the water  
There is a dark mango tree  
The bees fly in and out  
A girl stands beneath the tree  
The rain is pouring down.

222

TALK not of love  
For my heart is bursting  
The black bee is hiding in my flowers  
And my heart is bursting.

The bee and its honey is widely used in the poetry of the world as a symbol for the lover and his love. The English word 'honeymoon' is so familiar that probably most people use it without realizing the imagery that it suggests. The idea is frequently found in English poetry. Lodge, for example, writes :

Love guards the roses of thy lips  
And flies about them like a bee ;  
If I approach he forward skips,  
And if I kiss he stingeth me.

In a rapturous account of Love's Triumph, Ben Jonson asks :

Have you felt the wool o' the beaver,  
Or swan's down ever ?  
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier,  
Or the nard i' the fire ?  
Or haye tasted the bag o' the bee ?  
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she !

John Fletcher uses the same image in trying to delight his country lasses :

You shall have crowns of roses, daisies,  
Buds where the honey-maker gazes;  
You shall taste the golden thighs,  
Such as in wax-chamber lies.

Drayton uses the bee to create a general atmosphere of love and passion :

The bees up in honey rolled,  
More than their thighs can hold,  
Lapped in their liquid gold,  
Their treasure us bringing.

And Hookes in his *Amanda* describes how :

Nay, and the bee, too, with his wealthy thigh,  
Mistakes his hive, and to thy lips doth fly,  
Willing to treasure up his honey there,  
Where honey-combs so sweet and plenty are.

Herrick, in *The Captiv'd Bee*, uses the same idea of a bee that, going 'to tipple freely in a flower', mistook Julia's lips for it and got 'honey enough to fill his hive.'

In a charming anonymous poem quoted by Norman Ault in his *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*, we read :

Summer's nectar-gathering bee  
On my mistress' lips did flee,  
There he his honey labour left  
And of sweets himself bereft;  
But in her heart he fixed his sting,  
Giving sweets with sorrowing.

Herrick uses this imagery often. He has,

Each Virgin, like a Spring  
With Honey-suckles crowned.

There are two Cupids fighting 'about the sweet bag of a bee'; like a bee, Love first stings, then gives 'honey to salve'; the 'pretty pilfring bee' is a messenger taking a honey-bag to the mistress.

But perhaps the most daring, as it is the most wonderful, use of the bee simile occurs in Thomas Carew's *Rapture*.<sup>1</sup> In this great poem, it will be remembered, the poet describes the gradual approach of two lovers towards consummation, and concludes :

Then, as the empty bee that lately bore  
 Into the common treasure all her store,  
 Flies 'bout the painted field with nimble wing,  
 Deflowering the fresh virgins of the spring—  
 So will I rifle all the sweets that dwell  
 In thy delicious paradise, and swell  
 My bag with honey, drawn forth by the power  
 Of fervent kisses from each spicy flower.  
 I'll seize the rose-buds in their perfumed bed,  
 The violet knots, like curious mazes spread  
 O'er all the garden ; taste the ripened cherries,  
 The warm, firm apple, tipped with coral berries.  
 Then will I visit with a wandering kiss  
 The vale of lilies and the bower of bliss ;  
 And where the beauteous region doth divide  
 Into two milky ways, my lip shall slide  
 Down those smooth alleys, wearing as they go  
 A track for lovers on the printed snow ;  
 Thence climbing o'er the swelling Apennine,  
 Retire into the grove of eglantine,  
 Where I will all those ravished sweets distil  
 Through Love's alembic, and with chymic skill  
 From the mixed mass one sovereign balm derive,  
 Then bring the great elixir to thy hive.

In India the theme is used in classical poetry, and there is a beautiful little song in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, translated by Laurence Binyon :

In the dusk, as it falls  
 On the last golden hour,  
 The enamoured maiden  
 Takes a honeyed flower,

<sup>1</sup> Of course in Western poetry the bee stands for many other things. Its murmur puts Spenser and Keats to sleep—'What is more soothing than the pretty hummer?' and Milton compares a swarm of bees in spring time to the host of Satan preparing to war on heaven.

A flower the bees kiss,  
Part and kiss, hovering near;  
Its tendrils light as finger-tips  
She twines about her ear.

Some lines attributed to Vidyakara Misra<sup>1</sup> employ this symbolism with good effect :

Lo, there are many bonds  
But none like the binding of the toils of love  
Even the bee, skilled as he is in cleaving timber  
Lies helpless  
Bound in the hollow of a lotus.

Winternitz gives a love-charm from the *Atharva Veda*. The lover should tie to his arm an amulet of licorice wood, saying, 'This plant is born of honey, with honey do we dig for thee. Of honey thou art begotten, do thou make us full of honey. At the tip of my tongue may I have honey, at my tongue's root the sweetness of honey. In my power alone shalt thou then be, thou shalt come up to my wish . . . I am sweeter than honey, fuller of sweetness than licorice. Mayest thou, without fail, long for me alone, as a bee for a branch full of honey. I have surrounded thee with a clinging sugar-cane, to remove aversion, so that thou shalt not be averse to me.'<sup>2</sup>

The Uraon appear to be fond of songs about bees and honey, where these images have the same meaning as in Europe.

You planted a munga tree, father  
The munga has spread its branches  
The munga is in blossom  
The bees hum and fly  
They come to suck the honey.<sup>3</sup>

Crooke has an interesting note on the folklore of bees. 'In the jungles the people who collect honey think that if the hives

<sup>1</sup> Sir G. A. Grierson, 'Some Further Notes on Kalidasa', *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. xlvi, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> M. Winternitz, 'Witchcraft in Ancient India', *The Indian Antiquary*, xxviii, 81.

<sup>3</sup> *The Blue Grove*, iii.

are touched, except in the light half of the month, the bees will desert the place and never return. They always ask an astrologer or village sorcerer to select an auspicious time for this duty. All over the world the souls of the dead are supposed to take up their abode in bees and flies. This is the origin of the numerous superstitions connected with these insects. Thus in Switzerland bees are supposed to be the souls of the dead. In Germany the bee is believed to have survived from the lost Paradise of the Golden Age. Bees in England are informed when the master of the house dies; otherwise they would desert the place. They are believed to sing in their hives on Christmas Day. In Cornwall bees are never moved except on Good Friday. In Bedfordshire the people sing a psalm in front of a sick hive and they are sure to get well as the spirit of disease is scared by the noise of the singing. Numerous similar practices are found in England and Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

But apart from the fact that bees are generally considered lucky, and it is supposed to be a very good omen if a swarm settles in or near a house, we do not know how far these ideas are current in India.

<sup>1</sup> *North Indian Notes and Queries*, v, 99.

## THE SWING OF LOVE

223

O GAJABEL, take me in your swing  
And let us swing together  
Singing the while.

How sweet you look  
With dhoti underneath  
And cloth above  
May I climb into your swing ?  
Swing me, swing me with you.

If I don't see you every moment  
I am filled with longing  
But how can I climb into your swing ?  
Swing me, swing me with you.

A girl stands by while her Gajabel, a boy-friend, swings on his swing. The Gajabel is one of the many types of friendship made by villagers in this part of India. It is usually established between members of the same sex, but may sometimes exist between a boy and a girl. The word is used aptly here, for the swinging creeper and its associations of love and friendship blend with the idea of swinging, which—as we will see—is symbolical of the sexual act.

224

SWING swing Rani Raja  
Till the flowering of the rose  
Swing swing Rani Raja  
Till the flowering of the marigold  
Swing swing Rani Raja  
Till the flowering of the champa.

225

IF you cannot swing to and fro  
Catching my shoulders  
What right have you  
To be called young and a man ?

You always said to me  
 Ride, ride, ride in my swing  
 But you never put me  
 In your own swing  
 Sometimes it was brother's swing  
 Or he was swinging someone else  
 But you never put me  
 In your own swing  
 Sometimes brother swings you  
 And with your eyes you call him friend  
 But you never put me  
 In your own swing.

Frazer has studied at great length the interesting subject of the magical use of swinging.<sup>1</sup> Many Gond and Baiga shrines in the Maikal Hills have in front of them tall wooden swings, the seats of which are often studded with sharp spikes. On these priests and magicians swing themselves into a state of trance when they are able to proclaim the will of the gods. In other parts of the Central Provinces the Gond practise the Meghnath swinging ceremony with the same object. The songs, however, stress the erotic character of the swing—a point which was noticed by Freud and Havelock Ellis. Havelock Ellis says, we do not know on what authority, that in the temples of some parts of Central India swings are hung up in pairs, and men and women swing in them until they are sexually excited. It is certainly true that Gond and Pardhan women love a swing and when their husbands are away often make one in their houses. The references in the songs illuminate this practice which, says Havelock Ellis, is one of the six hundred forms of sexual pleasure enumerated by De Sade.<sup>2</sup>

The sexual character of swinging is clearly illustrated in a Pardhan Swinging Song which is sung by girls as they swing to and fro.

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: The Dying God*, 277-85.

<sup>2</sup> Havelock Ellis, *The Evolution of Modesty*, 174.

O the Rani swings below and the Raja swings above  
 What is the pillar made of and how have they made the rope?  
 Of silver is the pillar made and the rope is made of gold  
 O the Rani swings below and the Raja swings above  
 Swing swing, the Raja wearies. Swing swing the Rani  
 All my body is perspiring, swing swing the Rani  
 With her cloth she wipes his face, swing swing the Rani  
 The pillar is drooping and the strings have broken  
 No longer swings the Rani.

It is perhaps significant that the ancient Swing Festival of India was associated with Krishna. At first his image as a baby was rocked in a cradle, but later this was changed to the representation of the god as a young man accompanied by Radha. 'That swinging was a very popular pastime in ancient India is attested by numerous representations of the subject in the mediaeval sculptures of Orissa; Vatsyana speaks of a swing as a common piece of furniture in every house'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N. K. Basu, 'The Spring-Festival of India', *Man in India*, vii, 136.

## FLOWERS

227

As they care for flowers  
Growing in a Palace garden  
Keep my love like that  
Keep my love in your heart.

228

BLOSSOM is in her hair  
Beautiful is it as the plantain flower  
Some flowers bloom in the dawning  
Some flowers bloom at the dead of night  
The flower of holiness  
Blooms in the morning and in the evening  
At midnight blooms the flower of sin.

229

By every path and lane there is a garden  
There is a garden of flowers  
But give me a place in your garden, my beloved  
For this love, my enemy, will not let me alone.

230

HER long hair is all scattered on the ground  
I am going to pick the flowers  
At sunset her hair is all scattered on the ground  
And I am going to pick the flowers  
At bed-time her hair is all scattered on the ground  
I have picked a lovely flower.

## LOVE-BIRDS

231

LET me come to the mango-grove, my love  
Let your koel come  
Let me come to the mango-grove.

232

*Kuhu kuhu* cries the koel  
The swallow twitters in the sky  
But the house-bird talks at midnight  
And the man at cockcrow.

The koel or Indian cuckoo is a bird with a green bill and a long tail. The female is of a dark green colour with white bands and spotted. The koel is often used in Indian village poetry as the symbol of a bride or a lover. According to Vatsyayana the perfect girl, the Padmini or lotus girl, has a voice low and musical like that of the koel. In Mandla the bird is believed to be very lucky and to foreshadow the coming of a son or husband, when it cries *Uth dekh, Uth dekh*, 'Get up and look.'

Crooke records a proverb which says :

The crow calls on the left  
The cuckoo calls on the left  
Both are good omens.

When the Gond are discussing a problem and they wish to make the matter firm and settled, one of them says as he passes judgment 'This is my *koel boli*', or my 'cuckoo saying'.

An Uraon poem permits a boy to catapult all other birds but admonishes him on no account to kill a koel. W. G. Archer gives an Uraon poem which closely resembles one of those in this collection.

*Kahul kuhu*, the koel calls  
Sitting in the mango branches  
Koel, you went away for twelve years  
And in the thirteenth year you come and  
gladden the grove.

In this poem the grove is the village and the koel is a girl returning home after a long stay at her husband's house. The association of the koel with the mango tree, another marriage symbol, in both poems is interesting.

It is curious that in Europe the cuckoo, at least in former times, was far from being a good omen. Shakespeare's song in *Love's Labour's Lost* will be remembered :

The cuckoo then, on every tree,  
Mocks married men, for thus sings he,  
    Cuckoo, cuckoo !  
    O word of fear,  
    Unpleasing to a married ear !

But later 'the lewd cuckoo' has been transformed into 'a blessed bird' and 'darling of the spring.' In a folk-song from Wiltshire recorded by Alfred Williams, it is thus described :

The cuckoo is a merry bird,  
    He sings as he flies,  
    He brings us glad tidings,  
    And tells us no lies.

The cuckoo comes in April,  
    He sings a song in May,  
    In June he beats upon the drum,  
    And then he'll fly away.

The cuckoo is said to 'beat the drum' when he often falters and cries 'Cuck-cuck-cuck,' without the final syllable. This is said to be a sign of his impending departure.

## 233

*Jhir jhir* ripples the stream  
Plantains are growing on the bank  
Your body is like the stalk of a plantain  
Sweet as the divided mango is your body  
The koel longs for a mango  
And my life longs for you  
I cannot hold my life in patience  
Your body is like a plantain stalk  
Sweet as a divided mango.

The plantain is generally regarded as lucky and auspicious in India. Hindus believe it to be the abode of Devi

and in North India the tree is worshipped on the last day of Kartik. The first fruit of the tree should be given to a Brahmin. In L. B. Day's *Folk-Tales of Bengal*, a deserted wife sweeps the earth round a plantain and the tree blesses her. In the Maikal Hills also both Gond and Baiga regard the tree as lucky and use its branches during their marriage ceremonies. In Bastar, however, owing to the fact that the leaves are placed under a corpse while it is being carried out for disposal, the tree is believed to be inauspicious.

234

THE parrot weeps without its cage  
 My life weeps without support  
 How empty the house is  
 Without a girl  
 Day by day my body decays  
 There is no one to help me  
 No one ahead and no one behind  
 No one to give me wisdom  
 How empty the house is  
 Without a girl.

235

EVERY evening  
 The crows sit talking  
 But my Raja  
 Without a word  
 Left me  
 Without a word  
 Every evening  
 The crows sit talking.

The crow is a very natural symbol of the human beings in whose company it lives so intimately. Even in a village where there is little waste and little enough to get for food, the crows gather round and lodge in any neighbouring tree. The crow is regarded in Mandla as a learned bird, probably on account of its wonderful eyesight. It is supposed to know all about the *banaspati* or magic herbs. It is unlucky, however, to see a crow sitting on the back of a pig, nor should one see a crow bathing as one is about to start on a journey. If a crow says *rao* there will be a quarrel in the house, or

bad news will come. But if it says *cao* it is lucky. It is lucky also to see two crows feeding each other.

Crooke classes the crow with the cuckoo and the jay as a news-bearer. If a crow flies a short distance and hops about on the roof or near the house, it is a sign that the master is coming or that news of him may be expected.

## 236

THE kussera bird is swinging  
Free on the mango branch  
But you stand in the court  
How can I call you to me?

The meaning here seems to be that the bird on the mango branch is free to come and go as it will, but the girl standing in the court of her husband cannot come out to meet her lover.

## 237

LIKE a leaf he flew away  
Where has my talking-bird gone?  
He sits on the pillar  
Wet above and wet below  
But made of very fire  
In his sorrow I cared for him  
In mine he flies away  
Where has my talking-bird gone?

## 238

SOUL, you are burning burning  
For in the forest your bird  
Is wet with her tears  
Soul, were you a bird  
You could fly to her  
Soul, were you a bird  
You could fly to her  
With my message  
Soul, you are burning burning.

In this poem, the soul is called *hira*, diamond. The bird is the *pihu* about which many tender legends have gathered.

## THE COBRA GIRL

239

ENCHANTER, for what fault of mine  
Are you beating me?  
Lying on their bed the two embrace  
The girl is lovely as a cobra  
Why are you beating me?  
You have snapped the knots of my jacket  
And with my own cloth you are wiping  
The moisture from my face.

240

I LOST my diamond  
In the Gaurela bazaar  
The girl with cobra eyes  
Drew him after her  
Do not bite him, girl  
I will wait, I will wait  
By the river.

241

O MY black darling, move the straw shutter  
Don't make a sound, I'm coming secretly  
Spread the mat, I'm coming secretly,  
I'm coming naked, O my black darling  
I'm going to lie with you, O my black darling  
I'll come without a sound, O my black darling  
O my black darling, move the straw shutter  
Don't make a sound, I'm coming secretly.

242

You are coming very slowly, why do you delay  
 O my black cobra?  
 I have brought you anklets, measured to your feet  
 Why do you delay, O my black cobra?  
 I have brought you a sari, measured to your body  
 Why do you delay, O my black cobra?  
 I have brought you armlets, measured to your arms  
 Why do you delay, O my black cobra?  
 You are coming very slowly, why do you delay  
 O my black cobra?

243

WOMAN, shew your wisdom  
 You have two arrows  
 Of mercy and of scorn  
 The black-faced and hooded snake  
 Has two tongues  
 You have the knowledge of a panch  
 And a learned Pandit  
 Woman, shew your wisdom  
 Yet like a little child you pick up leaves  
 And in a moment make them into a plate  
 To give the hungry food.

Woman, says the Pardhan poet, is *nāri*, *nahar* and *nāngin*—wife, tiger and cobra. A woman is a snake because, 'Once she desires a man she chases him and bites him, thus making him love her'. 'To love a girl is like poison in the body'. There is a story that a Raja had a lovely daughter, so beautiful and auspicious that she was like Lakshmi herself. One day four rich men came at the same time wishing to marry her, and the father angry at their importunity made his daughter into four girls, one her original Lakshmi-like self, one a cobra, one a bitch and one a cat, and to each married one of the four suitors. So it is said that there are four kinds of women. Some are like Lakshmi, fortunate, beautiful and adored; some are bitches, some are cats and some are cobras.

The subject is a very large one and has been studied at length elsewhere. There are several stories in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* which are based on the motif of a snake inhabit-

ing a woman's body, and the idea goes back as far as Mandeville and legends about Alexander the Great.

The symbolism here appears to be reversed, but it is notable that Keats too has a heavily-coloured description of a woman-serpent.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,  
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue,  
Striped like a zebra, speckled like a pard,  
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd,  
And full of silver moons, that as she breath'd  
Dissolv'd or brighter shone, or interwreath'd  
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries,  
So rainbow-sided, full of miseries,  
She seem'd, at once, some penanc'd lady elf,  
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.  
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire  
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar;  
Her head was serpent, but, ah, bitter sweet!  
She had a woman's mouth, with all its pearls complete.

## SPORTING LIKE FISH

244

You go to the river  
And try to catch fish  
A lovely girl  
Has slipped through my hands.

245

HE went to bale out water  
From the pool and saw the fish  
Your cloth is torn  
And shows your breast.

246

THE ducks settle on the banks of Siuni  
What great love there once was between us  
But now you have wearied of me  
Great fish swim in the Siuni river  
Queen of my garden, let me take you to the bank.

247

You kill a fish and remove the scales  
My bird, where have you lost  
The lustre of your life?

Fish as a sex or fertility symbol is very old. The double fish is found on bronze bowls, bells and gongs imported from Eastern Tibet into the Brahmaputra valley. This is a Buddhist symbol, one of the eight auspicious signs. The same sign was regarded as lucky when put on the walls of huts in Orissa. In China the two principles of creation—male and female—(*yin* and *yang*) were represented by the symbol of two fishes. Double fishes also occur as a lucky sign on ancient pottery and other objects from China. The carp fish is held as a good omen for success in examinations even to this day. The kings of Madura adopted a fish or a pair of them as their family crest. In representations of the late Buddhist deity Hariti found in Bengal she has been

shown with four hands, one holding a fish, one a drinking bowl and the other two a baby. This appears to be a fertility symbol. The place of Matsya (fish) in the Tantric ritual is well known.<sup>1</sup> The famous archery competition for the hand of Draupadi was the attempt to pierce the eye of a metal fish hung high in the air, through a revolving disc.

The symbolism appears again in the sixteenth century Chinese novel *Chin P'ing Mei*, where Hsi Men and Gold Lotus are described as 'enjoying themselves like little fish in the water.' The idea occurs in a song written at about the same time in Elizabethan England by Gascoigne where the fish in the sea symbolize women, and the fisherman expresses the wish,

That all the seas at every tide  
Were his alone to fish.

Herrick, in a marriage song, calls on Night to bring the 'brisk Bridegroom' and the 'dainty Bride' to bed,

Where being laid, all fair signs looking on,  
Fish-like, increase then to a million.

Coming to modern India we find the Uraon using fish as symbols for marriageable girls.

The fish sport in the pools  
The fish sport in the pools  
The fish sport  
The bride sits in the mother's lap  
The bride sits on the father's knees  
The bridegroom catches fish  
The bride jumps in the corners.  
Jumps, holding herself with glee, in the corners.<sup>2</sup>

The expression 'the bridegroom catches fish' means that the marriage has been settled and a fish has been caught.

Among the Chongli, a youth proposes marriage with a girl by offering her parents a catch of fish taken by himself. The Mongsen boy does the same after the betrothal has been settled.<sup>3</sup> The presentation of fish is the formal sign that an

<sup>1</sup> See T. C. Das, 'The Cultural Significance of Fish in Bengal', *Man in India*, xii, 96 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Blue Grove*, 119.

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 270 ff.

Ao marriage is complete.<sup>1</sup> Among the Palaung of Burma, fish is also part of the bridegroom's gift to his bride's parents.<sup>2</sup>

The Lhota Naga use cooked fish as one of the ingredients of an aphrodisiac.<sup>3</sup> Crooke records that during a Lohar marriage in the United Provinces the bride holds a fish made of flour in front of the bridegroom who attempts to shoot it, and explains this as an obvious form of fertility magic. In the Central Provinces the ritualistic use of fish is more common at funerals.

<sup>1</sup> J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, 168.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ao Nagas*, 237.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 168.

## LOVE AND MUSIC

248

My love is playing on a fiddle  
He is hiding behind a tree  
O broken and blind may be the eyes  
Of any girl that looks at him.

249

THE young flute player  
Pipes on the river bank  
All my desire is resting in his flute  
And house and court no more content me  
Let them be burnt with fire  
Those bamboos that make the flute.

250

HE comes from the house as lightning flickers in the sky  
His hair is tied in a knot on one side  
He stands shining in the court  
What is he doing standing in the court?  
What is the boy doing? He is shining like the lightning  
He is standing on tip-toe playing on the flute  
He leaps in the air as he beats on his drum  
Come, let us go and listen to his flute.

251

THE drums are beating  
The singers are calling  
The Sunflower Queen has begun the dance  
What wood shall we bring for her house?  
What wood shall we bring for the beams?  
What wood shall we bring for the verandah?  
Gold we will bring for the pillars  
Silver we will bring for the beams  
Diamonds we will bring for the verandah  
Where the Sunflower Queen is dancing.

The singers of the songs in this collection are some of the poorest people in the world and it is safe to say that not one of them has ever seen a precious stone. Unlike aborigines living in the neighbourhood of a palace in an Indian State, the Gond and Baiga of the remote Maikal Hills do not even have the opportunity of observing from afar the bejewelled insignia of royalty. Yet references to the diamond, the ruby and the pearl are common in their songs and folktales. Motilal, or the Pearl Boy, is a common name and a Pardhan hero is called Hiraman Kshattri, the Diamond Warrior. 'A woman', says a proverb, 'is a diamond because she gives you one.'

The use of these symbols is probably a literary convention that has been acquired from wandering Hindu minstrels or has come down in the traditions of the ancient Gond kingdoms. The five precious things of Hindu story are gold, diamond, sapphire, ruby and pearl.<sup>1</sup> The five jewels are usually given as ruby, sapphire, pearl, emerald and topas.<sup>2</sup> In the *Katha Sarit Sagara* a beautiful woman is described as having a waist like a diamond and ruby-coloured feet.<sup>3</sup> Penzer quotes a story from Bernhard Julg about the Diamond Kingdom of Central India, though apart from the name the story has nothing to say about jewels.<sup>4</sup> Such references are frequent throughout the whole range of Indian literature and have affected the poetry of other tribes beside those of the Maikal Hills. There is, for example, an Uraon song

Come and visit us, brother  
With your diamond girl  
In the morning, brother  
With your diamond girl.<sup>5</sup>

The imagery is obvious and natural, as for example in Drummond's *Madrigal*.

The ivory, coral, gold,  
Of breast, of lips, of hair,  
So lively sleep doth show to inward sight.

What is remarkable here is its use by people to whom the objects of comparison are so unfamiliar.

<sup>1</sup> Penzer, ix, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, iii, 68.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, viii, 248.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, vii, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, vii, 8.

<sup>5</sup> *The Blue Grove*, 38.

252

THE drums agree together  
 To make a single rhythm  
 My love and I sit together  
 Like the lotus and its leaves.

253

THE drum is made of earth  
 But what a fine song it makes  
 I too am made of earth  
 But take me with you  
 Take me with your love  
 And from me will come a song.

254

ON the verandah they are beating the drum  
 In the court one plays the fiddle  
 In the village are the seven colours of sound  
 But it is only your life  
 That can fill my life with delight.

255

THERE are four legs to the bed  
 On the legs are four diamonds  
 On your chest are golden coins  
 On your feet are the musical shoes  
 From your lips comes the music  
 Of different colours.

This song is the rather unusual rhapsody of a girl about her lover. It is interesting that music is mentioned in terms of colour.

## THE DECEITFULNESS OF LOVE

256

HE talks and talks  
His words are as ripples on the water  
You know and I know  
That such talkers are deceivers  
They think of other's loves  
And forget their own  
He is like a rippling wave  
That passes by.

257

How young I was  
When you took me as yours  
And then you spoilt my life  
Mid-way in life you have deceived me  
But God will take me  
To the end of the road.

*Pār lagāna* 'to take across'. This, like the word *pardesh*, stirs the same sort of emotion as the expressions in English 'Journey's End' or 'The end of the road'.

258

I CUT thorn bushes and made a garden  
In my garden I sowed millet  
That I might eat and live I married you  
But half-way down the road you left me  
Beware of a deceiver  
He gets into your belly, takes away your wisdom  
He says it is shallow but tricks you into deep waters  
I married you that I might eat and live  
But half-way down the road you left me.

259

WHAT rage has caught your life  
 That your bones show through your body?  
 Was it the lightning of the sky  
 Was it a hail-storm that struck you  
 That your bones show through your body?  
 Not the sky's lightning nor the hail  
 Struck me, but loneliness  
 Without my beloved  
 So that my bones show through my body.

260

O MY soul be patient, she is very beautiful  
 But this lovely treasure belongs to another  
 How wonderful she is! When you see her  
 your mouth waters  
 But she is not for you. Be patient  
 Ah! she has come out of the house  
 She peeps out from the verandah  
 Tears fill my eyes, for she is not for me.

261

WITH sad news I am come  
 I am standing at your door with heavy heart  
 But you care not whether I weep or no  
 For you are with your beloved  
 But I stand at your door with sad news,in my heart.

262

THE quail calls in the stream  
 On the bank of the lake it cries  
 Burnt is the oil-seed  
 Burnt is the grass of last year  
 In the middle of the forest the quail calls  
 And the Raja comes and hears the quail calling  
 On the bank of the lake  
 The house is of mud  
 The door of cotton-wood  
 Milk-sweet of the brown buffalo  
 Is being cooked

The Raja comes hastily  
 But all he hears  
 Is the quail calling on the bank of the lake.

The quail is greatly relished by the Gond and Baiga for food. These birds are said to be great lovers and always feed near one another. If one of them is found missing, they all cry out, come together, look at each other and then continue feeding. A common refrain in the Karma songs runs 'The quail calls on the brow of the hill'.

## 263

THE Bairagi's son can eat food three days old  
 But day and night my tears  
 Drink my young blood  
 Day and night drink my young blood.

## 264

NEVER fall in love with a Jogi  
 For any day he may go on pilgrimage  
 Leaving you in tears behind your house.

We have already noticed that the Jogi, Bairagi or Sadhu, who is supposed to be the very embodiment of renunciation and chastity, often appears as the symbol of a lover. At a marriage the bridegroom is abused by his mother-in-law as a Jogi with matted hair full of scorpions. The symbol is appropriate not so much because the ascetic often has a very bad reputation among the aborigines but rather because he is always wandering on from place to place and never remains attached to a fixed abode. So too the aboriginal lover changes from girl to girl and can never remain in one place. Compare No. 49.

## 265

I BOUGHT a ring supposing it was silver  
 But when I put it on I find it copper  
 So if I am deserted by my Patwari  
 Of what use can a Munshi be to me?

A Patwari is a village revenue official of great importance to the people, as it is with him that most of their dealings about land are concerned. A Munshi is any kind of clerk.

## THE VAMP

266

You were sleeping beneath the mango  
But your feet were under the tamarind  
Your love-thief took away your bangles  
And all you got was blows and kicks  
It was you who called me there  
I poked and poked you with my stick  
But you never woke, my snuffling pet.

This is a humorous song about a girl who invited her lover to meet her in the forest. When he arrived he found her sound asleep, so he stole her bangles. When her husband discovered the loss he beat her. In the last three lines the lover, the *chhaila chor*, protests that it was not his fault. *Balaina* in the last line is someone who snuffles or has a running nose; it is a rather kindly term of abuse, often applied to children.

267

O THE zoolum of love  
In this Patangarh bazaar  
I am oppressed with love  
She has a red-bordered sari  
Her hair is tightly tied and sticks out behind  
My love for my own tribe weakens  
Shall I take her to the river  
With a bottle  
And excite her to love?  
O fair-bodied girl  
Your tight-fitting jacket  
Your long hair tied behind  
Going with uncovered head in the bazaar  
You oppress me  
O the zoolum of love.

Much admired is the fashion among Gond girls of tying the hair in a very big bun which sticks out at the back of

the head, and is often adorned with bright balls of coloured wool, flowers and bunches of cowries. Far worse than the exploitation and oppression of Governments and money-lenders is the harsh zoolum of love.

268

To kill a bat is easy  
 With a bit of split bamboo  
 Take her in a ditch and tickle her  
 Stranger, as you go along  
 Take her in a ditch  
 Easy as a bat.

It is supposed to be easy to kill a bat with a *dangnaiya*, a strip from a bamboo which has been split into four parts. It is as easy to seduce a flirt.

269

WORK in the fields is not for me  
 I am going to find a job.  
 You make a hut with walls of reeds  
 All day you have to husk the rice  
 Yet when a visitor arrives  
 How can you honour him?  
*Hil hil* blows the rain all day  
 Mosquitoes bite all night  
 There's no food in the house  
 And you must die between the empty bins  
 Work in the fields is not for me  
 I am going to find a job.

This grouse at the conditions of village life can also be used to convey a secret message. The man sings to a girl whom he is trying to persuade to elope with him, and describes the sort of life she will have to live if she refuses to accept the new and better job he offers her.

270

ROUND the goat's neck is a bell  
 Round the buffalo's neck a clapper  
 I will care for you with love

Double that I give my wife  
 As dark clouds hide the moon  
 So will I hide you  
 I will care for you with love  
 Double that I give my wife.

271

*Chituk chituk* go your toe-rings  
*Runjum runjum* go your anklets  
*Kudur budur* beats your heart  
 Yet you do not turn your head  
 And look at me  
 What an enemy you are  
 If I live one day I'll meet you  
 If I die the world dies for me  
 But I know your heart beat *kudur budur*  
 What an enemy I am  
 That you did not turn your head.

The picture here is of a girl going along the road with her husband. She meets an old lover and longs to look at him but dares not. Turning her head aside apparently absorbed in her husband she quickens her pace to a fresh jingling of her ornaments and her old lover gets some satisfaction from her embarrassment.

\*\*\* 272 \*\*\*

It was you who spilt the milk  
 On the way, on the way  
 So why are you accusing me?  
 The flirt was coming on the way  
 The Ahirin was going to him  
 They met below the pipal tree  
 And there they spilt the milk.

This song is interpreted by the villagers as meaning that a girl has been caught red-handed by her husband and she tries to turn the tables on him by accusing him of similar infidelity.

273

*Ghada-roda* fly the arrows  
Why should I stay in Mohagarh ?  
Some say, Kill him, kill him  
Some say, Catch him, catch him  
Some say, Drive him from our country  
Why should I stay in Mohagarh ?

This song describes the visit to a village of a young man who has succeeded in making himself very popular with the girls and as unpopular with the men. The village is called Mohagarh or Fortress of Love but he decides to go away for fear of what the people will do to him.

274

You go to the bazaar  
And for money buy potatoes  
When the young men know  
A girl's love for her husband is broken  
They chase her as if she was a bear.

## THE RIGHT TRUE END

275

O my sinner, let us spend this night together  
My mind whispers, Come, let us run away  
But I am afraid of that long journey  
I look at you and long to live with you for ever  
But at least, my sinner, we will spend tonight together.

276

CUT a green bamboo  
Pull off the bark  
Get a bed ready  
A bed with four legs  
At midnight there is a lovely girl  
Sleeping on the bed  
At midnight her lover  
Mounts his horse and rides away.

Compare Garcia Lorca's poem, 'The Faithless Wife'.

By the finest of roads  
That night I galloped  
On a mother-of-pearl filly  
Without bridle or stirrups.

277

THE moon is two days old  
They are all playing at home  
O love, not even in my dreams  
Could I find you  
As I turn to and fro  
On my midnight bed  
I know that you have left me  
And my love is scorched.

The image here is of the girl lover being turned face and about before the fire until she is scorched by its heat. The word *kalaapanā* which is used here refers to the baking of anything before a fire.

278

MILK in a dirty pot  
 Milk from the cow turns sour  
 So my loved enemy  
 I cannot sleep alone.

279

How can I go into the inner room?  
 My anklets sound *chunur chunur*  
 The wheat-bread is soft  
 The oil drips from it  
 O lover, eat, and you will be content  
 My anklets sound *chunur chunur*.

The picture here is of a youth who goes to visit his lover in her own house. She gives him his supper and he begs her to go with him into the inner room which with its grain-bins and darkness is a very common place for the meeting of lovers. She says that if she goes the noise of her anklets will betray her. The soft wheat-bread and the oil are obvious sexual symbols.

280

COVER me with your cloth  
 Alone I die  
 On this cold night.

281

How could I come  
 Without your calling me  
 How could I come to your bed?

282

SAD and lonely I left home  
 I spent four days in the forest  
 My life burns till midnight  
 As I remember you  
 And when at last I go to sleep  
 I see you in my dreams  
 My darling.

283

THE hot dust rises from below  
 The hot sun burns my breasts  
 Where is the shade of the mango grove?  
 Where is the jamun's shade?  
 Cover me with a cloth  
 That my breasts may not be burnt.

284

I HAVE come forgetting sleep  
 Leaving sleep behind  
 Leaving the sleep in my eyes  
 There was a bed for me  
 A bed that invited sleep  
 But as I lay there  
 I remembered you  
 And I came forgetting sleep  
 Leaving sleep behind.

The word for a comfortable bed, *kathri*, suggests that it has been made by spreading a great heap of old bits of cloth and other soft odds and ends. This does actually make a mattress which quickly lulls the sleeper to sleep.

285

THERE is a bed  
 But empty  
 O lovely child  
 Where has your laughter gone?

286

WHEN the fruit burdens the mango  
 The mahua flowers fall  
 At midnight all are sleeping  
 Come then when all the world is sleeping.

At midnight the dogs are barking  
 The stars have come into the sky  
 Long are the leaves of the young bamboos  
 And breaking through them comes my thief  
 At midnight the dogs are barking.

BLUE calf tethered  
 With a coloured rope  
 My heart dwells  
 In your begging-bowl  
 Stay, my madman,  
 Stay a night until  
 Our enemy the cock shall crow.

*Katori*, or begging-bowl, is a common sexual symbol. The idea of the dawn as the enemy who comes to disturb the rapture of love, is found in a Gond song :

It is growing lighter : we can see the fields  
 The hour of parting has come  
 My heart is full of anger against the dawn  
 For in this field we must part from one another  
 Now home will be no longer home to me  
 The forest is no more a forest  
 I will be restless in the village where I found  
 rest till now  
 But part we must, for our enemy the dawn  
 has come.

A saying reported from the United Provinces runs :

My lord will go in the morning  
 My eyes will be lost by weeping  
 O God let there be no dawn to such a night.

And in an anonymous poem from *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*, the lover exclaims :

Fain would I, Chloris, whom my heart adores,  
 Longer awhile between thine arms remain,  
 But lo, the jealous morn her rosy doors,  
 To spite me, opes and brings the day again.

My madman bathes in the golden tank  
Gold gold the water rises  
On the waves the peacock dances  
My heart my heart is far away  
On a journey with my friend  
Like a blue colt my madman dances  
Neighing *hiyo* *hiyo*  
On the waves the peacock dances  
And my madman bathes in the golden tank  
Gold gold the water rises.

FOR how short a time  
The blue colt  
Stays with the mare  
In sweet talk together  
Let us spend this short life.

MARRIAGE AND ITS SONGS



## THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

**T**HREE are a great many small variations in the marriage customs of the Maikal Hills, but the main outlines are the same for Gond and Pardhan, Baiga and Agaria as well as for the minor Hindu castes such as the Ahir, Dhulia, Panka and Dhimar. The chief distinction is to be found in the fact that the Gond, Pardhan and Agaria celebrate the main business of the marriage in the bridegroom's house, whereas both the most primitive tribes such as the Baiga (and in Bastar the Hill Maria) and the Hindu cultivators celebrate it in the bride's house. The legend that accounts for this describes how once, when a Gond bridegroom was on his way to fetch his bride, disaster befell the party and Dulha Deo in the shape of a tiger carried him off. The mediums were consulted and declared that henceforth the Gond should celebrate their marriages in the bridegroom's house, for similar dangers would not befall the bride on her way to join her future husband. Probably this is not the primitive custom, for both the most ancient and more 'advanced' communities agree in concentrating their ceremonies in the bride's home, and probably it was some actual incident as tradition suggests that induced the Gond and allied tribes to change their habits.

The Raj Gond and the other tribes in various places compromise by celebrating their marriages in both centres. Marriage-booths are erected in both the bride's and the bridegroom's houses and the procession has to go round the pole in both.

Other differences from tribe to tribe or place to place are less fundamental and are mainly concerned with picturesque additions. Thus the Baiga make an elaborate dummy elephant and the bride's brother and specially chosen visitors ride round the village on its back. A Baiga marriage differs in many minor particulars. These have been fully described in *The Baiga* and need not be repeated here. Marriages of the Baghel or Tiger sept of all tribes are remarkable for an incident when some of the bride's relatives—her father, brother or paternal uncle—are possessed by the Tiger God who is supposed to be angry at the loss of a girl from his

clan. In ecstasy they seize a goat, kill it with their teeth and drink its hot blood.

Here we are concerned with the marriage ceremonies mainly as a setting for the marriage songs. We will try to simplify the sequence of events as far as possible so that the beautiful outlines, which are themselves a poem in action, can be clearly seen. We will describe therefore the main incidents of a typical Pardhan or Gond marriage of the Dindori Tahsil.

*The Business Aspect.* Most true romance is rooted in economics and the aboriginal, who is essentially a realist, does not find the marriage ceremony any the less inspiring and poetic because of the sound business arrangements that are behind it. A marriage between a young man and woman depends on the ability of the man's family to pay an adequate bride-price and on the willingness of his family to give the traditional presents at the various points of the marriage ceremony. The fact that the price is pathetically small and the presents mean and pitiable to alien eyes should not blind us to the poetic value they have to the people themselves. Ben Jonson was able to make great poetry out of Volpone's passion for wealth. Marlowe found equal inspiration in the argosies of the Jew of Malta. Shakespeare uses the same motif in *The Merchant of Venice*. To a Gond or Pardhan a seer of haldi or five kuro of salt are equally potent to stir the emotions and awake romance.

The business side of the marriage begins with the engagement. This is generally arranged shortly before the marriage. It is rare to find boys and girls, as in Bastar, betrothed in youth, and indeed if the boy's family delays unduly in coming for the marriage the girl's parents may give her to someone else. The procedure of a Gond betrothal is not elaborate and there are no extended symbolic dialogues. The boy's parents come to the girl's house and when they are asked their business say, 'O there is nothing special. But we hear you have goods in your house.' 'Yes it is true that we have goods here and when the right people come they will take them away.' Then the boy's parents say again, 'We are thirsty and we have come for water.' If the girl's parents are agreeable they bid them drink from their well, but otherwise they say that the stream is dry and they have no water. The Baiga expression is: 'I have come to find a gourd in which to put my seed.'

Once the girl's parents have signified that they are willing, the boy's father cuts up a betel-nut and offers it to the girl's father. He says, 'No, give it to her mother.' But the mother says, 'No, give it to him first, for I only do what he considers right.' Then at last the girl's father takes it and says, 'With laughter and pleasure I have received a gift.'

Both parties then proceed to a long discussion of the terms of the bride-price and the date of the marriage and when these are settled the boy's parents return home.

Some time later the boy's parents go again with gifts for the bride and on this occasion the elders of the girl's village are invited. The girl is dressed in the main house, where the gods live and the food is cooked, with the clothes and ornaments sent by her future husband and the betrothal is ratified with liquor in the presence of the people.

Finally a day or two before the marriage, the boy's father goes with the full bride-price. If this is paid in grain it is measured in the presence of a Panch. The business side of the marriage, except for the presents that are to be given in the course of the ceremony, is now complete and as the boy's father goes away they say to him, 'Send the Water-Carrier soon; if he is late we will return your gifts and give the girl to another.'

#### THE MARRIAGE: THE FIRST DAY

*Going to fetch the Girl.* On the day before the marriage ceremonies are due to begin, the bridegroom's parents send a youth who is called the Bisti<sup>1</sup> or Water-Carrier with one companion to fetch the bride. He has to take with him a load of wood, a bundle of leaves, some haldi, a bottle of liquor, two bits of wheat-bread, and the bridegroom's dhoti with which to cover the bride. When they reach the girl's house the messengers are treated with the greatest ignominy. The people send them to fetch water to collect cow-dung. They make them sweep and cow-dung the girl's court and the courts of five of the villagers. If the Bisti refuses he is beaten and driven away. He is made to clean the kodai and bidden prepare food for the marriage party. The young girls of the house tease him mercilessly. They disguise the bride and bring out another girl

<sup>1</sup> This word is usually pronounced in Hindi Bhisti, but the local people always say Bisti: the name is given because the messenger has to fetch and carry.

for him to take away. When he opens the bridegroom's dhoti to cover her they throw ashes and oil and if any one can write he inscribes filthy words upon it. When he finds he has the wrong girl he has to give a fine of a bottle of liquor. At last he discovers the real bride and then her mother takes her in her lap and she begins to sing the farewell songs.

291

How have you brought the *chila* bread?  
 How have you brought the milk, mother?  
 I have brought the bread in a dish  
 I have brought the milk in a pot.

And so on, addressing every relative in turn.

292

FATHER, had I been your son  
 I would have stayed to thatch the roof  
 To take the cattle out to graze  
 To drive the plough across your field  
 But I was born your enemy  
 A daughter who must go away  
 At home I used to laugh and dance  
 Today I leave you weeping  
 The crane despairs beside the lake  
 Your enemy weeps on the threshold  
 Your daughter weeps on the threshold.

*The Preparation of the Girl.* It is now, approaching the evening of the first day and the mother and other relatives prepare the girl for her departure.

The main point of the preparation is the anointing with the yellow turmeric which forms the most striking part of the marriage colour-scheme. All day women have been grinding the haldi, singing as they do so a rather monotonous song.

293

WHERE does the grindstone come from?  
 Where does the haldi come from?  
 O the grindstone comes from Ramnagar  
 The haldi comes from Haldinagar.  
*Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!*

Who will take the grindstone?  
 Who will take the haldi?  
 Her father's father will take the grindstone  
 Her father's mother will take the haldi.  
*Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!*  
 How shall I carry the grindstone?  
 How shall I carry the haldi?  
 You will carry the grindstone on a buffalo  
 You will carry the haldi on a bullock.  
*Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!*  
 How many miles must we carry the grindstone?  
 How many miles must we carry the haldi?  
 O you must carry the grindstone a mile  
 O you must carry the haldi for two.  
*Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!*  
 Where are we to unload the grindstone?  
 Where are we to unload the haldi?  
 O you must unload the grindstone at the entrance  
 to the booth.  
 O you must unload the haldi at the door of the house.  
*Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!*

Then the young girls of the house begin to ask the bride riddles which she is bound to answer on pain of not being allowed to go for her wedding. They sing, grumbling at the haldi sent by the bridegroom's family :

294

THE bridegroom's mother is up to tricks  
 She has sent black bhilwan oil  
 Our bride is but a child  
 She cannot bear that oil.

This preparation, which goes on all the evening, is a serious and important business, for it aims at removing the bride and bridegroom from *le monde profane* into *le monde sacré*, where at a critical period they will be safe from the attacks of witch or ghost. It is impossible to avoid being reminded of the evening before an operation, the diet, the purge, the shaving of the body, the painting yellow of the skin with picric acid, the rendering of the patient someone

aseptic and separate and apart, in the midst of great dangers but with still greater recourses to his hand.

On this evening, therefore, both bride and bridegroom in their separate houses are prepared. They are covered with the haldi paste. Heavy silver torcs are put round their necks. They are given iron betel-cutters to hold. On their wrists are put bracelets of Virgin Iron—made of the first iron extracted from a new furnace, the ore having been dug from a new pit, a very potent demon-scarer.

This evening the family refuses to let the girl depart, and the Bisti has to doss down somewhere in the village for the night.

*The Making of the Marriage-Booth.* In the meantime, at the bridegroom's house the omens have been taken, and the marriage-booth has been prepared. The officiants of the marriage are chosen. The Dosi is the Master of Ceremonies who directs the proceedings. The Suasa is the bridegroom's 'brother', almost the Best Man. Both bride and bridegroom have Suasin, close, but not strictly defined, relations, who are something more than bridesmaids.

In the afternoon the Dosi takes the youths of the village out into the jungle to cut wood for the booth. They go to a sarai or dumal tree and say, 'We have come to take you for the marriage; will you give your branches or no?' The tree, speaking through one of those present, may say, 'No, go to the west or east' and the party goes on until the tree says, 'Yes, I will give my branches.' Then they worship the tree and cut it down and the Dosi distributes, to the party a ceremonial meal.

Then with the boughs of the tree and a small log of saleh wood on their shoulders the party returns home, singing,

CUT down, cut down  
The many-leaved bamboo  
Cut, cut the leafy boughs  
Bring leafy branches for the booth  
And lay them close together  
Or moon and sun  
Will burn my bride  
And my bride will die of thirst.

When they reach the front of the house they pile up the branches and the village women who have assembled to greet them try to capture the log of saleh. There is a vigorous struggle between men and women for its possession, the result of which is believed to show whether a girl or a boy will be the first fruit of the marriage or whether the husband or wife will have the ascendancy in the house.

After this the log is taken aside to be shaped and patterned into the Mangrohi and the boys are escorted into the court of the house by the women singing,

296

THE mango swings against the sky  
O my sweet enemy, take my life  
And I will care for yours.

297

O THE mango in the valley  
O the creeper on the hill  
Come to me, my love  
And I will hide you in my dress.

Then still singing the boys build a large booth in the middle of the court with the boughs of the sarai; if possible, mango and bamboo branches are added. Mango leaves are strung on a cord and tied round the booth. The Mangrohi is placed in the centre and a small plantain tree and a saleh branch planted beside it. This Mangrohi is a carved wooden post, probably phallic in origin, two to four feet high, round which the bridal pair will perambulate.

While the booth is being built the women prepare the kalsa. The kalsa is an earthen pot which is filled with rice and closed with a small earthen lamp. It is often beautifully decorated with coloured grains of unhusked rice fixed to its surface with cow-dung. As they decorate the pots the women sing,

298

WHO will tattoo the kalsa?  
The seven Suasin are asleep in the booth.  
Who will tattoo the kalsa?

The bridegroom's sister is the sugar of love.  
She will tattoo the kalsa.

## 299

KALSA, kalsa, where were you born ?  
Kalsa, kalsa, where were you shaped ?  
At Tikra-Domra I was born  
In the potter's house I was shaped.  
Kalsa, kalsa, who bought you ?  
Your grown-up darling daughter.  
Kalsa, kalsa, who paid for you ?  
Your grand-mother took me  
Your father paid.

Haldi, haldi, where were you born ?  
Haldi, haldi, where were you shaped ?  
In Koeli-Kachhar I was born  
In the gardener's house I was shaped.  
Haldi, haldi, who bought you ?  
Your grown-up darling daughter.  
Haldi, haldi, who paid for you ?  
Your grand-father took me  
Your mother paid.

Now a small mud platform has to be made round the Mangrohi. Omens are taken to show where the earth for this should be dug. A procession, led by the Suasin carrying lighted lamps on their heads, goes into the garden and some earth is dug up with a rice-husker. The women fill their saris with it and carry it back to the booth, singing as they come :

## 300

O WHENCE comes the deer dancing and leaping ?  
O where is the green grass on which she will graze ?  
She has come to graze on the green grass of Patangarh  
Let us make the deer sit on her throne  
We will wash her in water from the decorated vessel  
We will make her sit in the green booth's shade.

Then the earth is mixed with water and a little platform is made. Two small slabs of wood are also placed there to be put under the feet of bride and bridegroom 'for they are

Raja and Rani for two-and-a-half days and their feet must never touch the ground.' As the platform is being plastered the women sing,

301

WHO will plaster the Mangrohi?  
 The seven Suasin are asleep in the booth  
 Who will plaster the Mangrohi?  
 The bridegroom's brother is the sugar of love  
 He will plaster the Mangrohi with earth.

## THE SECOND DAY

*The Blessing of the Relatives.* We now return to the bride's village. On the morning of the second day she must be up early and sit with her family singing of the sorrow she feels at leaving them. These songs, some of which are sung by the bride to express her emotion, and some of which are sung by her friends to try to make her weep, are used throughout the ceremony. A few specimens are given here.

302

SHE is going to her husband's house  
 And leaves her brother weeping  
 When I go to bathe  
 I will see you standing there  
 I will say, Where has she gone  
 Who used to bring me water?  
 When I go to the bazaar  
 I will see you standing there  
 I will say, Where has she gone  
 For whom I used to bring anklets?  
 When I go to the river  
 I will see you standing there  
 I will say, Where has she gone  
 Who used to wash my clothes?

303

FLYING flying the parrot  
 Settled on my nose-pin  
 It pecked at it and spoilt it  
 How dare you, parrot of the woods?  
 For I brought that old nose-pin  
 From my mother's house.

How fine is my brother with his creaking shoes  
 And the blue bow in his hand  
 Brother, as you care for the shoes on your feet  
 Care for me as well  
 You have tethered the cow under your tree  
 But you have let the calf wander alone  
 To a stranger's land.  
 The cow is moaning under the tree  
 The calf has gone to a stranger's land.

She weeps, and goes on to address her mother :

MOTHER, why did you not eat castor-seeds  
 And make your body barren of a girl?  
 Why did you not take ginger and pipal leaves  
 That your womb would bear a boy?

Now she remembers what her elder brother used to say to her, and weeps again :

BROTHER, you used to say  
 How happily my little sister  
 Goes with her friends  
 To bring water in a small-lipped pot  
 And now that pot is broken, sister,  
 As our companionship is broken  
 How can that wicked pot be mended?  
 How can we come together again?  
 A potter will mend the broken pot  
 At mother's house we will meet again.

Then she remembers what her sister used to say to her, and weeps again :

THE bed on which we used to sit  
 Touching thigh to thigh  
 Was made of thin cord  
 And now that bed is broken

As our companionship is broken  
 How can that wicked bed be mended?  
 How can we come together again?  
 A carpenter will mend that wicked bed  
 At mother's house we will meet again.

After the weeping songs are over the girl stands in front of the Water-Carrier and blesses all her relatives, but specially her brothers and sisters :

308

SHE said to her father, O father  
 You were greedy for the bride-price  
 Today I have repaid the milk  
 She said to her brother, O brother  
 Accept the blessing of your enemy.

309

How long, my brother, will this rice remain ?  
 How long will my blessing last ?  
 Your girl, the enemy, is on her way  
 To a foreign land  
 Only your own earnings will remain  
 I go to a foreign land  
 May your cows and buffaloes increase  
 While I go to a foreign land.

310

You could get no liquor, brother  
 And you sold me to get liquor  
 My being at home troubled you  
 But you'll be happy now you've turned me out  
 Bring me grain in a winnowing-fan  
 And before I leave this house  
 I will bless my home  
 And everyone who lives there.

Her brother comes weeping with a winnowing-fan full of kodon. She puts it in her lap and sits on the threshold. He sits with his back to her, holding out his cloth behind him. She pours the kodon into his cloth, blessing it and sings again,

311

If I live I'll come to meet you.  
 If I die I'll never see you more.

The Water-Carrier has to be ready to catch the bride directly she has finished, for immediately after the last blessing she tries to escape into the house and if she succeeds he must pay a fine.

But if he is lucky, he is able to catch her and at once slings her on his back and carries her out of the court into the road. There the neighbours bring sugar-water or milk and make the girl drink it and put little presents into her hand. When this is done, the Water-Carrier with the bride on his back, and several of her little sisters trying to climb on as well, sets out with the bride's party for the bridegroom's house and village. Before they leave the house they sing :

312

O BROTHER, as you've given me so much  
 From me take this blessing  
 Eat and drink in your house  
 Live for age after age  
 And for a hundred thousand years  
 May your court be beautiful as moonlight  
 May it always be clean with fresh cow-dung  
 Let there be cows and bullocks put together  
 May you grow old with your yoke-fellow of equal age  
 May your house be full of sons and their wives  
 Though your fate is written in another land  
 Let us meet fifty-two times in a year  
 If we live let us meet often  
 In this treacherous world  
 Even the iron bar gets rusted  
 What faith then can we put in human life?  
 I am all alone, my brother  
 If you forget me  
 Who will there be to ask after me?

313

THE beautiful bride is adorning her body  
 O God, she is deserting the door of her mother.

As they go along on the way they sing Dadaria songs :

314

THE stick is only of bamboo  
 But it has a silver knob  
 The meeting of two friends  
 Is like mango pickle to the lips  
 How sweet your voice sounds  
 Heard from the street.

315

How black your hair is  
 By the play and beauty of your eyes  
 You made me your friend.

*The Meeting of the Families.* As they approach the boundary of the other village the people come out to meet them. They bring a litter for the bride's mother, a horse for her father and a pot of liquor. There then follows a ceremonial meeting between the parents of the bride and the parents of the bridegroom, a ceremony which is of great importance in emphasizing the fact that the marriage is more than a union of two young lives, but is a formal alliance or renewal of an alliance between two families. Liquor is drunk and leaf-pipes ceremonially exchanged. When this is done the bride's party is escorted into the village and the bride is taken to her *janwās* or camp which she and her party will use as their headquarters throughout the proceedings.

It is now that there begins that peculiar feature of a marriage ceremony, the exchange of the filthiest abuse between the two parties, which results, as W. G. Archer has said, in 'release of repressed energy which when applied to the marriage must necessarily make it fertile.' On this day most of the abuse is given by the bride's party. They are still in a superior position and they go everywhere *dang-dangāke*, or proudly, not caring for anybody. If they are offended, they declare that they will go away and not give their girl. Their temper and abuse is more than symbolic. There is often a real feeling of resentment towards the people who are taking a girl out of their clan and home.

316

THE bridegroom's mother  
 Has eaten bunches of castor-leaves  
 And now sits with reddened teeth  
 Like a prostitute.

317

THE bridegroom is sitting  
 His teeth red with betel  
 And looking like a pimp.

318

GIVE me, son, your golden comb  
 And I will do your hair  
 For twelve kos lies your matted hair  
 Full of eight score scorpions  
 Where have you come from, Jogi-fakir  
 To carry off my maiden?

*The Mock Fight.* The natural sequence of this exchange of abuse is the mock fight with wooden swords between the two parties. The fight is as much a dance as anything else and there is a regular system of the clashing of swords and ferocious movements. After the fight, men and women begin to dance.

319

Bride's party :

HALF the stream is full of flowers  
 The other half of bread  
 Let the bridegroom's mother  
 Embrace him openly.

Bridegroom's party :

Bride, why did you come so late  
 To eat our spinach?  
 You slept with your own brother  
 And then you came to us.

It is worth noting that, as in Bastar, it is considered very unlucky if anything is dropped on the ground during this

dance. If a man's turban is knocked off there is a real quarrel; the bride's party declare that they will go away and the bridegroom's people have to spread the offending turban on the ground in front of them before they will forgive the insult.

320

My wanton samdhin is a great milk-giver  
 Bring a pot and we'll go to milk her  
 One day we'll milk her  
 Two days we'll milk her  
 Three days we'll make it into curds  
 We'll churn it *ghamar* *ghamar*  
 And turn it into buttermilk  
 We'll knead it *gadar* *phadar*  
 And turn it into butter  
 We'll cook it *karak* *karak*  
 And turn it into ghee  
 And slop it over the bridegroom's head.

*The 'Neng'.* Before the bride's people consent to settle down in their camp they demand a number of gifts. These are known as the *neng* and are demanded at intervals throughout the whole proceedings. When the bride is to be fed she refuses to eat until she is promised a present. When the people come for tika the Suasin refuse to let them do it until they are rewarded. When bride and bridegroom wish to enter the house they are prevented by little girls until they bribe them with a gift. So now the bride's party demands cloth for the bride's mother and grandmother and various other presents. Only when these are given they agree to settle down in their camp and to allow the bridegroom's party to anoint the girl with haldi and oil. Even now the bride is hidden somewhere and a wrong girl is produced. When at last she is found, the bridegroom's party attempt to feed her with ceremonial bread, but she refuses until they promise to give her ornaments. This is her one chance of getting them. The boy's mother exclaims, 'Daughter, the whole house and all that is in it is yours, what more do you need?' But the girl insists on her presents.

*The Anointing.* Both bride and bridegroom are now anointed with haldi. Seven women place their hands, palm

upwards, on their heads and an arrow is put above the hands. They sing all the time :

321

O ELDER sister, bring fresh cow-dung  
And prepare the four corners of the room  
Do not let the lines of flour run crooked  
But go as straight as moon and sun  
So all the city folk will come to gaze  
And your name will long remain.

322

BLACK clouds gather  
Rain patters down  
O brother, let go your little calf  
That she may feed  
On the tender shoots of grass.

Oil is poured down the arrow and allowed to trickle all over the body. Then five virgin girls touch feet, knees, hands and forehead (in that order) with haldi and the Suasin cover them with haldi seven times. This is the Haldi Chaghana, or 'making the haldi climb'.

323

THE first oil has climbed  
The second oil has climbed  
And with the oil Narayan Deo  
Brother, cast the shadow of your sword  
The clear shadow of your sword  
Brother, cast the shadow of your cloth  
Your cloth studded with diamonds.

324

IN the bridegroom's land  
Haldi is costly  
In the bridegroom's land  
Haldi is plentiful  
O my grown-up darling !

325

THEY have gone to the Forest of Joy  
 They have brought back sandalwood  
 They will put it on your head  
 May there be much haldi  
 May there be much silver  
 In your house.

326

THE moon said, I am great, I am great  
 The sun said, No I am great, I am great  
 Haldi said, I am small, I am great  
 Who is making the haldi climb?  
 Brother is making the haldi climb  
 Why do you look so cheerless, bride?  
 Why droops your body like a flower?

Bride and bridegroom are picked up by the Suasin and carried round the booth. Once again the people try to make the bride weep and the women exclaim, 'How sorrowful a gift is a daughter, for she makes us weep not only at her death but while she lives.'

An old woman sings,

327

My daughter grew as quickly  
 As a tender shoot of grass  
 And never will she be able  
 To return the milk she drank.

And the bride replies,

O mother, I grew as quickly  
 As a tender shoot of grass  
 And I never will be able  
 To return the milk you gave me.

Sometimes the girl remembers a dead brother :

328

MOTHER bring a ladder  
 Pull down, pull down

The star in the sky  
For my marriage  
Mother bring him down.

329

THE bride weeps sitting in the house  
Today my father has made me  
A stranger in my own home  
The crane weeps in the Forest of Joy  
The peacock weeps in the Forest of Sandalwood.

*The Ceremonial Bath.* After this, while the people stand round and sing, the bride and bridegroom in their separate places are given ceremonial baths. Crowns, which used to be made of leaves of the date palm but are now often of coloured paper, are put on their heads and the hair of each is plaited into a seven-fold braid. During this, which involves a long and tedious wait for the guests, the Sajani songs are sung. The dancing becomes wild and exciting and is accompanied by the throb of the drums and the clashing of brass plates and cymbals.

330

WHERE are the twice-seven drums thundering ?  
Where the groom is sitting on his platform  
Bridegroom, you have dressed so carefully  
Where are you going ?  
Where my darling girl is to be married  
There I am going.  
How will you tread on a stranger's heel ?  
I cannot say but, mother, I am going to her  
I will pay the Heel-price  
And so I will tread on her.  
But, son, there are monsters on the way.  
I will feed them on grain  
But without fail I must go to her.  
How will you tread on another's door ?  
I will pay the Door-price  
And I will get a water-girl for you.  
How will you catch the hand  
Of a stranger's daughter, son ?  
I will pay the Hand-price  
And take her 'by the hand. "

The Shividan (Heel-Price), Duwardan (Door-Price) and Hathdan (Hand-Price) are various Neng or Hindrances, when the marriage is interrupted until the boy promises a gift to his bride or her relatives.

331

DRESS, bridegroom, dress yourself  
Who brought the dhoti to tie round your waist?  
My grandfather's weaver brought it.

Dress, bridegroom, dress yourself  
Who brought the turban to tie round your brow?  
My father's weaver brought it.

Dress, bridegroom, dress yourself  
Who brought the crown to put on your head?  
My brother's weaver brought it.

332

IF there was a well in the middle of the court  
And its mouth was covered with heavy stones  
And across it lay a plank  
There our daughter would sit and bathe  
And the city folk would come to gaze  
And our name would long remain

*The Giving of the Ring.* The *chulmundri* ring is a mixture of iron and copper and the giving of it is an important part of the ceremony. The bride is taken to the path in front of the house. As the bridegroom is carried out to join her, she sings,

333

O BROTHER, put on your creaking shoes  
Take your cudgel in your hand  
Mount the spotted colt  
Beat this hunchback this side and that  
Drive this trifler home again  
Give him five rupees, my brother  
How nice he looks  
But inside he is cruel  
Give him five rupees, my brother  
So that he'll go home  
Give him five rupees, my brother  
Let him go away!

The groom is then seated beside her and a cloth is stretched above their heads and a wooden sword placed between them. The bridegroom, holding the ring in his mouth, catches the girl's right hand with one hand. She clenches her fist as hard as she can, but at last he gets it open and slips the ring on the third finger. In return she puts an iron ring on the corresponding finger of his right hand.

Bride and groom are then given a little meal of *chila-roti*, *halwa* and *khichri*. This is the first time that they eat together. Friends put the food into their mouths and while they are eating the women again try to make the bride weep. Son and mother sing tender exchanges.

## 334

Son :

How did you make the bread, mother?  
Why is your body withering?

Mother :

Son, why do you say  
That my body is withering?  
Take a mouthful of milk from my breast  
Take two mouthfuls of bread  
My darling grown-up son.

Son :

Mother, I have taken  
Milk from your breast  
Mother, I have taken  
Bread from your hands.

*The Tying of the Knot.* Now comes the Dosi and ties bride and groom together. In the knots are put an areca nut, a copper coin and a bit of virgin haldi.

*Kuāri Bhānwar.* Bride and bridegroom are then taken round the marriage pole three times; but this is only a preliminary ceremony and is not yet binding upon them. The bride goes in front and is followed by the groom who has to tread upon her heels. They are followed by a number of people holding wooden swords above their heads. There is a lot of horse-play; men and women throw mud and cow-dung at each other, the drums thunder and the women never

stop singing. They especially taunt the unmarried girls who are present.

335

THE saja tree withers on the mountain  
 The goinja grows old on the hill  
 May that family decay  
 That lets its daughters grow old in the house.

336

THE wheat is killed by rust  
 The pulse is ruined by frost  
 The mahua tree is struck by lightning  
 And all the liquor-vendors weep.

Bride and groom sit down and there is a preliminary tika ceremony when their close relatives come and make marks of oil and haldi on their foreheads. As they come, the women sing :

337

IN the father's house there grew a fragrant tree  
 Its scent spread through the world  
 The bees swarmed round it  
 O father, send a flower to your father and mother  
 When he heard the news, grandfather saddled his horse  
 Grandmother prepared her litter  
*Dip dip dip dip* the litter came  
*Hin hin hin hin* came the horse  
 O mother, light the golden kalsa  
 And bring it to the marriage-booth.

*The Game of the Grindstone.* Now some of the relatives bring out a grindstone such as is used for crushing spices, and carry it about as if it was a baby. They throw it to one another and cry, 'Look out, it may fall and break its head.'

Just before the binding part of the ceremony comes the Haldi Utarna, when bride and groom are anointed with oil and haldi, but downwards, from head to feet.

338

THE first oil has climbed  
 The second oil has climbed  
 May brother bridegroom climb the mountain  
 How thick the oil is everywhere  
 Down his legs runs the oil of rye  
 The Teli is weary of pressing it out  
 He has gone mad with pressing it out  
 So bring the oil of til  
 Green, green are the branches of the booth.

339

OUT of the house she comes  
 To the green, green marriage-booth  
 But why is her body drooping?  
 Why is your mind so sad, my bride  
 Why droops your body like a flower?  
 Without my mother, my mind is sad  
 Without my father, my body droops  
 If today your mother were living  
 She would have shaded your head with her cloth  
 If today your father were living  
 He would have guarded you with his sword  
 I have plucked a flower  
 And sent it to call them  
 Go, go, little flower  
 To the land of my father and mother  
 Now mother is coming in a litter  
 And father is coming on a horse  
 Mother, here is your loving child  
 Mother, take her for a moment in your lap  
 Henceforth she will be a stranger to you.

A remarkable song is sometimes sung about this time,  
 when the bride communes with her dead grandfather.

340

The bride :

WHO have brought the gods in their hands?  
 Grandfather has brought the gods  
 Grandmother has brought the gods

Awake, awake, grandfather  
 Why do you sleep day and night?  
 You eat nothing day and night  
 Awake, grandfather, and eat  
 From whose hands, my grandfather,  
 Do you get your cup of liquor?

The bride's dead grandfather replies :

I get it from my son-in-law  
 You have given me strong liquor  
 And you have enchanted me  
 Don't say anything, my daughter  
 This is no time for you to speak  
 Once only, daughter, could I wash your feet  
 I can't do it again  
 Live long, my daughter, I have washed your feet  
 Had I died before, my daughter  
 I had not been honoured with the gods  
 Live long and well, my daughter  
 Had I died before, my daughter  
 How had you remembered me?  
 Now you have enchanted me  
 By buying strong liquor for me  
 How can I not listen to your word?

The bride :

O Kalarin girl  
 You have enchanted him  
 With strong liquor  
 Bought with my money.

The Kalarin :

For money I gave strong liquor  
 I have not killed a cow  
 It was liquor for your marriage  
 How have I sinned  
 As if I had killed a cow?

*The Bare Bhānwar.* Bride and groom are now prepared for the essential part of the ceremony. The Kotwar stands up and proclaims, 'The Rani and Raja of two-and-a-half days are coming. Keep your sight pure.' The bride's Suasin

leads the way holding the bride's left hand by the little finger. She has a pot of water in her free hand and lets a few drops fall to the ground as she goes along. Then comes the bridegroom holding a betel-cutter in the left hand which the bride grasps in her right. They are followed by a party of 'soldiers' guarding them with wooden swords and other people who throw rice at them. The bridegroom again must press the bride's heels as often as possible with his toes. Women sing abuse as the procession goes slowly seven times round the Mangrohi. 'Look at the fox gaping from side to side,' 'Look at the brother-in-law of a monkey, he does not know how to walk, that brother-in-law of a pig, that hunchback. Fie on him', and so on.

*The Ceremonial Greeting.* Bride and groom then sit down under the booth, their Suasin immediately behind them. A dish of haldi is placed before them and a pot of water, and everyone comes in turn for the ceremonial greeting. First they wash their feet, then put a mark of rice and haldi on their foreheads with similar offerings of haldi to the Mangrohi and the kalsa pot, and finally give any present that they may have brought. When the mother comes, the girl cries, 'O mother, you have given me a body, but you have not given me luck.' After the father has done tika, he shouts, 'Listen all of you, today I am giving my daughter a cow and ornaments'—whatever it may be. While this continues, women break into the wild disordered Birha dance.

## 341

My feet itch for sounding anklets  
 My forehead itches for a spangle  
 My life itches for a slender girl  
 Let me search for her in the bazaar.

## 342

*Tew tew tew* cries the lapwing  
 In the nest eggs lie tip to tip  
 The brown pigeon and the blue  
 And flying away together.

This is a long and tedious ceremony. When it is finished the attendants have to massage the stiff legs of bride and bridegroom. Finally the young husband takes his wife into

his house. A cloth is spread on the ground up to the door and the bridegroom walks on it into the house followed by his wife. She first bows to the threshold and then, raising the cloth behind her, goes reverently in.

The knot is now untied and husband and wife come out and salute everybody. This is the first time in their lives that they have touched the feet of their relatives or 'kissed' them, for this is not done by unmarried children.

*The Marriage Feast.* It is now evening and the marriage feast begins. Directly it is over, every member of the bride's party must run away. It is regarded as a curse if any of them remain in the bridegroom's village. The women dress up the bride in a boy's clothes and try to carry her off. The bridegroom has to catch her and give money or liquor to the party to ensure that she is left behind.

*The Consummation of the Marriage.* There is no ceremonial, as in Bastar and among many Hindu castes, for the consummation of the marriage. On this night the girl goes and sleeps among other girls of her own age-group and the boy goes to sleep with the other boys. But the boys soon begin to say to him, 'Why are you alone? Was all the work we have done today in vain?' At last he goes to where the girls are sleeping and finds his wife and says, 'Come, let us go to sleep in the little hut.' She is bound to protest, 'I will scream, I won't go, why should I go?' When he tries to force her, she says, 'Why didn't you marry your mother?' But at last he pulls her away into his hut saying, 'Have I spent all this money just to look at you from a distance?'

#### THE THIRD DAY

*The Visit to the Bride's Home.* On the morning of this day bride and bridegroom go for what is known as the *Chauthiya Barāt*. They go in procession singing songs.

#### 343

How often I've warned the young cowherd  
 Not to go to a Gond village  
 For Gond girls flicker like lightning  
 They stop the boys on the way  
 Now they have stolen your stick  
 And other cows have eaten your fodder.

When they reach the village the bride's mother greets them and washes their feet. They go into the house and give a ceremonial greeting to the girl's parents. The husband gives a bottle of liquor to his father-in-law saying, 'Take this, for I have come to see the roof-tree of your house' and he looks up at it. He also gives food to the family and when they have eaten they say, 'Let us go and untie the knot in the river'.

*The Procession to the River.* Bride and groom are now tied together and are taken in procession to the nearest stream or river. As they go boys and girls sing Dadaria antiphonally.

## 344

COME to the bank of the sparkling river  
And I will show you what is in my heart.

## 345

YOU catch the fish and I will cook it  
The love of my friend takes me out of the world.

## 346

COME to the deep stream and take your vows  
Holding water in your hands.

## 347

THEY are all working in the field  
My girl, meet me down by the river.

## 348

O MY girl, somehow I will catch you  
Even if you hide beneath the water,  
I will drag you out.

When they reach the river their wedding garments are removed and the bride's Suasin sits down on the bank with her feet in the water. The bridegroom sits in her lap, the bride in his. He unties the plaits into which his wife's hair has been woven and she turns round and unties his, a little rite that probably symbolizes mutual help in domestic matters. Then a pot of cold water is emptied over them and the bride

jumps up and runs into the river. Her husband has to chase her and beat her once or twice with his clenched fist.

The bride now picks up the kalsa pot and wades out into the stream with her Suasin. They hide the pot under water, and the bridegroom has to go out and find it. Then he hides it and his wife has to find it.

*The Shooting of the Deer.* Bride and bridegroom bathe and are dressed again in their marriage garments and once more tied together. The bride puts the kalsa on her head and her husband takes a bow and arrow in his hand. They begin the procession back to the house, but after they have gone a few yards they stop and some way ahead of them a model of a deer made of leaves is placed on the ground; the husband has to shoot this through the loophole made by his wife's arm as it holds the pot on her head. First of all she puts bread and sugar in his mouth with her free hand without turning round and 'feeds' the bow and arrow in the same way. Then the boy must shoot the deer. He must do it seven times and should he miss, it is considered most unfortunate.

*The Rite of the Wooden Babies.* When they get back to the house the bride's parents bring out two little slips of coloured wood and swing them to and fro in their arms. 'They have gone to hunt the deer; don't cry, my children.' Then water is poured over them. 'Look', they cry, 'the babies are weeping.' More water is poured and they say, 'Look, the babies are pissing.' At last, they tip them into the fold of the bride's sari and make her clasp them to her breast.

A feast follows and now is the turn for the bridegroom's party to return the abuse that they had borne so patiently on the previous day. There is a great battle of wits but the most insulting and dirty language can be used without offence. The abusive songs used earlier in the marriage are called Bhadauni: these are the Sadauro.

THE wedding-party comes  
By the bank of the river  
Shouting they are going to eat a pig  
To eat a pig  
But the impotent fools

Where will they get a pig?  
 Let them feed on the vaginae  
 Of their own little sisters  
 Cutting them *khot khot* into little bits  
 They come shouting they are going to drink water  
 To drink water  
 But the impotent fools  
 Where will they get water?  
 Let them dig in the vaginae  
 Of their own little sisters  
 And scoop out the water  
*Dum dum* from those little wells.

## 350

MAY a scorpion bite you  
 As you get up and down  
 May a scorpion bite you  
 As you make your bed  
 May a scorpion bite you  
 As you sleep with your man.

## 351

THERE are bunches of supari  
 In the garden of coconuts  
 My samdhin's hair-band is red  
 Come take her to the brinjal garden  
 But there the thorns prick her  
 Come take her to the bank of the river  
 But there it is very cold  
 Come take her to your attic  
 It is our brother's attic  
 There are ten beds and he uses them all  
 Sister, may your nose be burnt  
 Below there is a bed  
 Above are the stars  
 My brother sleeps above  
 My samdhin lies below.

This night husband and wife stay in the bride's house and again go to bed separately. But again at midnight, 'when the lamps have burnt low', the bridegroom takes his wife saying, 'Come to my bed.' 'How can I come?' she

says, 'I am ashamed to do it in my mother's house.' But she goes all the same.

## 352

THERE were two friends, a crab and a frog  
 They decided that one of them should marry a prawn  
 So the crab married her  
 At the marriage that clever water-snake played the drum  
 The snake asked, How did you find such a beautiful bride  
 What medicine did you use?  
 I spent eight cowries, and bought the medicine  
 And made her mad with love for me  
 From Ramnagar came a scorpion  
 And played the cymbals without being asked  
 Then all the children began to scream.

## 353

I HAVE seen a wonder  
 A monkey milked a cow  
 It put the milk in an earthen pot  
 And took the curds to sell.

## THE FOURTH DAY

Early in the morning the bridegroom says, 'Now let us go'. After a final feast for near relatives in the house, the bride bids a last farewell to her parents, and they sing the 'weeping' songs.

## 354

WHAT a sweet and lovely parrot it was  
 It climbed and climbed on the top of the house  
 It was singing all the time  
 O mother, you have sold that talking parrot  
 What greed possessed you, mother  
 To sell that beautiful parrot?  
 How long will the money last, mother?  
 But you sent your parrot to live lonely in the jungle  
 You will open the bag  
 You will peep at the rupees  
 But your parrot has gone into exile  
 O what a sweet and beautiful parrot it was  
 That climbed about the branches of your tree!

355

O FATHER, you get a pile of rupees  
 But for me there's only a heap of broken earthenware  
 O father, for you there's a lot of liquor  
 But for me there's only water from the river  
 O mother, for you there's a beautiful sari  
 But for me there's only a spider's web.

356

THE mango and the tamarind  
 Bloom in her father's garden  
 The parrot eats the leaves  
 Take grain in your hand  
 And comfort this poor parrot  
 For she is flying to a stranger's tree  
 Come down, come down, my parrot  
 Come rest in my lap  
 I will console you, my parrot  
 For you are flying away to a stranger's tree.

357

You have tied the cow beneath the tree  
 You have driven out the calf  
 To wander in a strange land  
 You have pulled up the thorn-bush with its roots  
 You have bent down the parsa tree to the ground  
 O brother, I was never bent down by your words  
 But now a stranger's words will bend me.

358

A LAMP shines on the hill  
 Whose love is shining there?  
 The haldi is climbing on Ram-Lakshman  
 His love is shining  
 Green green she issues from the house  
 Outside the bride's dear body droops  
 The haldi is climbing on Sita-Janaki  
 His love is shining  
 Why do you look sad, my bride?  
 Why droops your body like a flower?  
 She mourns for her father,

Her mother, her brother  
That is why her body droops  
Her dear body, like a flower.

Should she be too young to live with her husband—child-marriages are slowly invading tribal country—the youth goes home by himself. But more commonly he takes his bride with him. As they go, the villagers come and give the girl milk to drink and put small presents in her cloth.

When they reach home, the boy's relatives come out to greet them. An old woman of the grandmother class brings a pestle and a curd-churner tied together and decorated with sarai leaves, passing it seven times to and fro above their heads. Then the boy's Suasin do Sigh—they warm their hands at the flame burning in the kalsa lamp and put the warmth with their hands on their foreheads. Many people come forward to perform this pretty little rite of welcome. Then the parents ceremonially take the newly-married pair into the house. They sit them down and give them food, saying to the girl, 'This is your house and door. It is no longer ours. If you give us food, we will eat; if you deny us, we will starve. Look at the door, it will be as great as you make it, it will be as small as you make it, but now it is for you to rule.' And to the boy they say, 'Hitherto you were alone, now you are tied to another; keep within your own boundary. Hitherto you went here and there and met whom you would; now live in your own home. Look at her face, keep her well, she belongs to another's house. Be good to her'.

*Conclusion.* We have already spoken of this ceremony as a work of art. There is little religion in it, but it has great social and symbolic value. It is hard to conceive of a better way of impressing on a man and woman their social and sexual union. The tying together of the clothes, the exchange of rings, the first meals together, the processions hand-in-hand, the sitting together with the knees closely pressed against one another, the ceremonies by the river that symbolize mutual aid in domestic, sexual and food-obtaining activities, are of great significance. They are all the more important because some of them are things that a boy and girl would never do publicly together. When they sit 'thigh to thigh' in front of everyone, they feel they really belong to one another.

## TECHNIQUE OF THE MARRIAGE SONGS

THE following examples will illustrate the form and music of the marriage-songs.

### SONG FOR TATTOOING THE KALSA

359



*Aranda baranda kai tathiya kalsāla kon goday O  
Dulaha ke bahini māyāgur kalsāla ohi goday O.*

THERE are many kinds of pots  
But who will tattoo the kalsa?  
The bridegroom's sister is the sugar of love  
She will tattoo it.

### SONG AT THE KUARI BHANWAR

360



*Sāja budhāwai sāja dongariya  
Ki goynja budhāwai pāhār  
Goyンja budhāwai pāhār  
Bittiya budhāwai apane mayikuwa.*

Old grows the saja on the hill-top  
Withers the grass in the forest  
A girl grows old in her mother's house  
Fie on such a family!

## WEEPING SONG

361



*Ahira ke uthangan ahira ke uthangan ki pandhari ki lāthī  
 Mor bhaiya ke uthangan kono nahi ay  
 Ki bhaiya mor  
 More bhaiya ke uthangan kono nahi.*

The cowherd's support is his white staff  
 But my brother has no support  
 O my brother, he has no support.

## SONG DURING THE ANOINTING CEREMONY

362



*Are bāri ma jaudai bāri ma jaudai  
 Ki bāri kareliya  
 Are chhichali bichhali gaise dar  
 Dulha hare bābu are chhichali bichhali gaise.*

The creeper has spread all over my garden  
 The karela in my garden  
 Its branches have spread everywhere  
 O brother bridegroom, they have spread everywhere.

*Haldi kahāy haldi kahāy  
Mai bare mai bare.  
Are chanda kahāy are chhote bare.  
Dulhāre bābu are haldi kahāy  
Mai bare mai bare.*

Haldi says, haldi says,  
I am great, I am great.  
O the moon says,  
We are both great and small.  
O brother bridegroom, the haldi says,  
I am great, I am great.

## SAJANI SONGS

THESE songs may be sung either during the dances or indeed at any time during the ceremony when there is a gap to be filled. The name Sajani implies their use while the bride is being dressed and adorned.

363

Cows graze scattered in the field  
But buffaloes with horns together  
A stranger's son, a stranger's daughter  
Are sitting thigh on thigh  
If you don't believe it  
Come see it for yourself  
They are sitting thigh on thigh.

Cows are married women who work scattered over the countryside. Buffaloes are men who work hard when they have to, but are happiest in company, joining horn to horn. But a young boy and girl sit together as close as they can, as in the marriage ceremony.

364

WHERE do the dark clouds gather ?  
Where do the rain-drops fall ?  
In the sky the dark clouds gather  
On the earth the rain-drops fall  
Who weeps like a rippling river ?  
Whose little life goes restlessly to and fro ?  
Who sheds tears from eyes of pearl ?  
Whose eyes are cold and hard ?  
Father weeps like a rippling river  
Mother's little life goes restlessly to and fro  
Brother sheds tears from eyes of pearl  
But his wife's eyes are cold and hard.

Compare Herrick's 'precious-pearly-purling tears'.

365

How many colours has my samdhin?  
 For she, the black cat with a long vagina  
 Has married a fool of a husband  
 We have come to see what work she can do  
 May a scorpion bite her long vagina  
 Aha! A scorpion has bitten her vagina  
 She is sobbing *kalhar kalhar*  
 Her brother is blowing on the place to cool it  
 I said, Sister where has the scorpion bitten you?  
 We have wasted all day massaging her vagina  
 Yet the pain of the scorpion's bite will not go away.

It is interesting that at one point of a Kayasth marriage in the Shahabad District of Bihar when the Domkach is performed, the central figures of the pantomime are a woman who has been stung by a scorpion, another disguised as a country doctor and other women acting as servants and messengers. 'The woman knows she has been stung but cannot say where and a careful test proceeds mounting gradually from her toes, heels and shins to her knees and thighs. As her clothes are pulled back and her private parts reached the excitement and merriment come to a climax. The bite is discovered in the most improper of her parts and she declares she is cured.'<sup>1</sup>

366

*Hu Hu Hu!* The horse Birbandhan  
 Where shall I go the horse Birbandhan  
 I Birbandhan will go to the village  
*Hu Hu Hu!* The horse Birbandhan  
 I will go to Ghunari's house  
*Hu Hu Hu!* The horse Birbandhan  
 Whom will I catch there  
*Hu Hu Hu!* The horse Birbandhan  
 I will catch Sona  
*Leh Leh Leh Leh!* The horse Birbandhan.

The horse is not only an object of religious veneration, connected with the ecstatic trance, lucky and pure, but it

<sup>1</sup> W. G. Archer, *The Wedding of the Writers*, which I have been privileged to see in manuscript.

also has important sexual properties. The stallion scares away the demon of barrenness. In the *Ramayana*, Kausalya touches a stallion in the hope of getting a son, and a king and queen smell the odour of the burnt fat of a horse with the same purpose. During the Ashvamedha the queen lies at night beside the slain sacrificial horse. To the Gond and Pardhan a horse is full of sexual associations. 'When we look at a horse we think of sex'. The marriage songs are full of references to the animal, most of them very coarse. It is said that a woman will always be one of the seven kinds of horse—*argal*, which carries its rider quickly to the law-court; *nāngin*, in whose presence wealth soon leaves the home; *tanhi*, which kills its owner; *rikārshin*, with a long tooth, a devil, which should be sold as soon as possible; *jeher*, which kills any companion; *godda*, which is quarrelsome and cannot be tamed, and *padam*, the lotus horse which has white marks on the legs, and is lucky and auspicious.

367

THE hawk returning home  
 Looks down on field and hill  
 It sees the business of a girl's betrothal  
 It sees the marriage-party come.

368

KOEL on the mango branch  
 Why are you weeping?  
 Were your father living  
 He would come to meet you.

369

I CAN'T stay any longer in his house  
 He crams his mouth with balls of rice  
 But he only gives me gruel  
 He puts *kājal* in his eyes  
 And a spangle on his brow  
 But he doesn't even give me oil  
 My hands are burnt and blistered  
 My back is breaking *sal sal*  
 Through this constant husking rice  
 O sister, I can stay no longer in his house

370

COVER me with your cloth  
 Last night I nearly died of cold  
 In their house is milk and wheat  
 But she never cared for me  
 When she saw a boy  
 With his dhoti to his heels  
 She would run at once towards him  
 Like the sticky mud  
 Of which a hearth is made  
 She sticks to other boys  
 To other boys she showed her face  
 But to me she showed her buttocks  
 She would eat rice and pulse  
 All I got was dry bread  
 She would sleep on a soft bed  
 But I lay on the floor  
 She would put on her finest clothes  
 And sit on her bed with parted hair  
 While I went out to work.

This is a description of the experience of a Lamsena boy who was unable to bear the treatment he received from his future bride. He has now run away to another girl and is telling her how badly he had fared.

371

WHICH brother is riding the horse  
 And who is feeding it?  
 Sonsai is riding the horse  
 Rewa is feeding it  
 Tell Rewa's sister to feed the horse  
 If she won't, give her four-score blows  
 Beat her till you skin her  
 And make a drum with the skin  
 Let Rewa beat the drum  
 Let his own sister dance.

372

MOTHER, take this water  
 From the stream below the tree  
 Take the twigs up to the house

From this stream I will not rise  
 In this stream I will not rest  
 Till my life is ended  
 As the dark mud dissolves in water  
 So is my life dissolving  
 Mother, how long will you use  
 The grain I pounded?  
 Mother, how long will the water last  
 That your parrot carried home  
 When the parrot flies away?

373

ON the verandah sits your parrot  
 In tears complaining  
 Father, you have sold her  
 Your chattering parrot  
 But how long will that money last you?  
 With the price you got  
 You may build a big house  
 The greed for money is very tall  
 With the price you got  
 You will build a long cattle-shed  
 On the verandah sits your parrot  
 In tears complaining.

374

You have tied the cow under a tree, father,  
 But the calf you have sent to a stranger's land  
 How great is your lust for money  
 You have got it and tied it in a bundle  
 But you have sent your daughter to a stranger's land  
 How long will the money in the bundle last?  
 How many days will it keep you a king?

The money is, of course, the bride-price to which much more attention is sometimes paid than to the bride.

375

IN his task a servant is absorbed  
 By a mango the koel is ensnared  
 The cow is held all day at the shady resting-place  
 By her mother's home a girl is caught  
 She will never leave it unless she is sent away.

A koel never leaves a mango until it has finished it: the cattle never leave the mid-day resting-place until they are driven out by the Ahir. After marriage, a girl will not go to her husband's house until she is escorted thither with due ceremonial. An alternative interpretation is that if a girl comes to her mother's house after a quarrel, she will not return to her husband unless he comes personally to fetch her.

## BIRAHА SONGS

THESE songs are used indifferently at marriages or funerals, though there is little in their subjects to connect them with either. The word 'Biraha' is said to mean 'sorrow'; and the songs are used by the Gond and Baiga while a bridegroom takes a girl to his house and after the feasting on the tenth day celebrations of a death. The singers stand in a group and sing quickly and very loudly; then the song stops and the drums begin and they dance, each alone, bending down and hopping about with great vigour.

376

THERE is no thunder in the sky today  
Nor are the clouds driven to and fro  
I know, I know  
It was a dry cloud thundered  
Fie on your earthen pot  
That breaks at the first touch of water.

A girl has broken her water-pot down by the stream, and when she gets home she has to face an angry and sarcastic mother-in-law. The song accuses her of breaking the pot during a struggle with a man (dry thunder) and at the first touch of water (intercourse).

377

To the edge of the woods  
Have come the thieves  
The cows are safe in their shed  
But the thieves have stolen the calf.

The thieves are the bridegroom's friends who carry off the calf, the bride. When sung at a funeral, the thieves are the messengers of death.

378

HALF the garden is sown with til and urid  
Half with kachur  
For the drummers there's five rupees  
For the dancers a handful of dust.

379

ON the flat hill the fig tree has ripened  
 For this the parrot preens her wings  
 Brother prepares his rakish turban  
 Bhauji the parting of her hair.

380

IN Hira River I lost my diamond  
 In Ganga-Jamna my nose-ring  
 In Mai-Narbada I dropped my jacket  
 My young breasts are bare as a fakir.

381

THE ploughman drives his plough  
 His Sita brings him pej  
 With crackling ribs he drinks water  
 Open my riddle.

I have not found anyone able to solve this riddle.

382

IN July the rain falls *rim-jhim*  
 In August it comes pouring down  
 When I think of my husband  
 Tears rain from my eyes.

383

As you blew on the fire  
 Your moustache was burnt  
 Fie on you, virile woman  
 As you were cooking  
 Your beard was burnt  
 You are lucky, virile woman  
 The black cat  
 Always eats the little dove.

There is a wide-spread tradition—it exists also among the Juang, for example—that women formerly had beards and moustaches. I think the reference to the black cat at the end of the song suggests that the virile, masculine woman (not, very common in aboriginal India) devours her little husband as a cat devours a dove.

384

HOOKAH says, I am the greatest  
 Chilam says, No I am greater  
 For I am feminine and so  
 I keep everybody happy.

The chilam or earthenware pipe with its large bowl is a  
 not very obvious feminine symbol.

385

O DEWAR, give your parrot  
 Chains in her ears to wear.

386

DEWAR, as I was drawing water  
 My nose-ring fell into the stream  
 And a fish has carried it away  
 I fall at your feet  
 Throw your hook into the stream.

387

WITHOUT oil  
 Without haldi  
 The young girl  
 Lies with her boy.

388

A TOY cart must have its child  
 A peg must have its tethering-rope  
 A village must have its headman on his horse  
 A house must have a girl.

389

THE koel calls *kuhi kuhi*  
 O koel may your caste be burnt  
 For you, koel, I spread a bed  
 Where were you hiding all night?

390

THE booth is made of saja and sarai  
 Green bamboos are spread above  
 The seven sisters clean the court  
 How shining is the water-girl.

391

THEY come from the hills  
 The dwellers in the hills  
 The thief comes from the stream  
 The cows and buffaloes are loosed  
 But the shed is stolen.

This is a riddle-song, to which the answer is 'Bees and a honey-comb.'

392

CUT fifty bundles of grass with your sickle  
 And in the road make a little hut  
 So as I go by I can get a glimpse of you  
 For in your big house  
 Your heart does not beat  
 And your eyes are hard  
 I fold my hands, my love  
 Give me one word of love.

A poor girl is pictured as in love with a rich youth living in a big house where he forgets her and which she cannot approach.

## CRADLE SONGS



## CRADLE SONGS

CRADLE songs, like songs of mourning, are generally improvised, but a few tender and charming little songs are standardized. The following is intended to make the child understand, and so go to sleep.

393

*Hiroli hiroli wo dāi so jāy so jāy wo  
Kon māre kon gāri de wo lādhaitin tola nindī āwe wo  
Kāhe kha rothās dāi kāhe kha rothās wo  
Ninduli kha rothās bachhiya ninduli kha rothās wo  
Ninduli pathoi de wo ramhula ninduli pathoi de wo.*

Hiroli, hiroli, mother. Sleep O sleep  
Who would beat you, who would abuse you?  
My darling, let sleep come to you  
Why are you crying, mother, why are you crying?  
For his dear little sleep my calf is crying  
Let Ramhula bring him his dear little sleep.

Ramhula is the name of an old Ahir grandmother, famous for singing babies to sleep. The word 'mother' in the song is addressed to the child. This is a common practice; even a grown-up man may be addressed as mother by an old woman.

394

*Are lallu bārobir tohe bulāwe jamuna ke tir  
Roti tātī tātī pakāyo jema dārau ghi  
Chār kawar khāle re bāro more judehi jiv  
Tig dig tig dig konda roti khāy khāy  
Bābu nachai jhāy jhāy.*

Lallu, my warrior child,  
They have called you to Jamna bank  
I will cook hot hot bread and pour on the ghee  
Eat four morsels and I will be happy  
Tig dig tig dig, eating the bread of chaff  
My baby dances jhāy jhāy.

THE swing goes to and fro my baby  
 Among the mango branches  
 Your father has gone away  
 With his laden bullocks, little son  
 Your mother has become  
 The she-cobra of the ant-hill  
 The swing is going to and fro  
 Among the mango branches.

There is a story behind this song. Long ago there lived an old widow who had an only son. He took service with a Lamana and was always away on long tours with his bullocks. He married a very beautiful girl. A few days after the marriage the boy had to go away on his master's business. As soon as he had gone his mother turned the young wife and her little brother out of the house. They made a little hut of leaves under the mango tree and stayed there in miserable poverty. The girl was pregnant and when the child was born she sent her brother to get the necessary ceremonial food from her mother-in-law. The old woman prepared rice and curry of a cobra, cutting it up into small pieces so that it would look like fish. She put this into leaf-cups and sent it on the boy's head. Rai Gidhni, the vulture, came swooping down from the sky and carried away all the food from on the boy's head except one little bit of rice that stuck to his hair. When he reached the hut the girl was greatly concerned and said, 'Let's see if Rai Gidhni has hurt your head'. As she was examining it she saw the scrap of rice and was so hungry that she ate it. Immediately the strong poison of the cobra turned her legs into the tail of a she-cobra and she found herself a woman in the upper part of her body and from her waist downwards a snake. She went to live in an ant-hill near by and used to come out to feed her child and then glide back to the ant-hill. In her absence her little brother would swing the child to and fro and sing this song.

O Lallu, my baby Lallu  
 First you were the royal goat  
 Then you were the royal grindstone

Then you became the parrot  
 And after that you were *lāl-bhājī*  
 O Lallu, my baby Lallu.

The story to which this song refers is that a Gond woman once gave birth to a she-goat and a girl together and then died. The husband married again and the step-mother was so cruel to the little girl that in order to keep her alive the she-goat had to feed her with its own milk. When the step-mother saw what was happening she killed the goat and ate it, but before it died the goat said, 'Bury my bones inside the house'. They did so and the next morning the little girl found a new grindstone above the place where the goat's bones were buried and this stone fed her every day with flour. When the step-mother discovered this, she broke it and threw it under a mango tree. The next morning the little girl found a parrot sitting on the branches and throwing down mangoes for her to eat. The step-mother then killed the parrot and threw its body into the garden. The next day the little girl found such delicious *lāl-bhājī* growing all over the garden that she picked some and took it to the Rani. The Rani ate it and at once became pregnant and in due time was delivered of a splendid boy. But when he was born he cried and cried and nothing could stop him until the Rani sent for the little girl who sang the above song. The child was then happy and the Rani adopted the girl as her own.

## 397

HURRO hurro, my father  
 Your daddy's organ is as big as this  
 Your mother's organ is like a buffalo's  
 Hurro hurro.

## 398

THIS fellow cleans twelve cowsheds  
 This fellow sweeps twelve courtyards  
 This fellow fills twelve great big pots  
 This fellow husks twelve measures of rice  
 But this old man just sits and warms himself by the  
 fireside  
 Move the fire old man for a cart is coming.  
*Kutu lulululu.*

This is a song of the forefingers and the thumb. Each

of the hard-working fellows are one of the fingers and the old man is the thumb. When the singer gets to the thumb part she bends it over and imitates the old man pulling his fire (which is in an earthen pot) out of the way. For the cart she makes her fingers crawl up the baby's arm into his arm-pit where she tickles him saying *Kutu lulululu*.

399

BABY had four cowries  
 I bought salt with them  
 I made my cows lick the salt  
 The cows gave milk  
 The milk was made into khir  
 And baby ate the khir  
 What baby left father ate  
 What father left mother ate  
 Take care children  
 Don't sneeze or fart  
 Baby's going for his marriage  
*Diggi dola diggi dola*  
 There goes his litter.

400

O BABY, let little sleep come  
 Let it come to baby  
 What is the plough made of?  
 What is the nail made of?  
 The plough is made of sarai  
 The nail is made of harra  
 Don't cry baby  
 Sleep is coming baby  
 Don't cry baby don't cry  
 Sleep is coming baby.  
 Son, put your plough down by the wall  
 And come to play with your child  
 I can't take him grannie  
 Give him to his mother  
 Who will give him milk  
 But his mother can't take him  
 For she has gone to catch fish in the pond  
 Tie him to my back  
 His mother asked me to look after him

Don't cry baby don't cry  
 Sleep is coming baby.  
 I'll give you *bāsi* in curds  
 Don't cry baby don't cry  
 Tie him properly auntie  
 Or his father will abuse you  
 Don't cry baby don't cry  
 Your mother has gone to work in the field  
 Don't cry baby don't cry  
 I'll give you gram to eat  
 Don't cry baby don't cry  
 I'll put you in a swing  
 Don't cry baby don't cry  
 Sleep is coming baby.

## 401

*Are are* little brother   
*Tilil tilil* sounds the flute  
 Sleep sleep to your heart's content  
 But a mouse will steal your nappy  
 And when you wake up  
 You'll hold your head and cry.

## 402

SILLY baby, I'm not going to smack you  
 I will feed you on *bāsi* and swing you to and fro  
 Till sleep is spun into you  
 Let me husk the rice, baby  
 Let me prepare the kodai  
 Let me go to pick *bhāji*  
 Let me kindle the fire in the hearth  
 Your father's coming, little son  
 He will give me *gāli*  
 I must make the water hot  
 For when your father comes  
 He will want to bathe  
 Sleep, sleep, little son  
 Let sleep be spun into you.

*Tola nindri to bhānjai*, 'Let sleep be spun into you!'  
*Bhānjna* is the word used for spinning rope.

403

THE cradle blossoms  
 Its flower is beautiful  
 Its red fruit shines.

404

*Nanna re nanna re bhaiya*  
*Nanna re nanna re*  
 I was cooking beans  
 And I found a plait of hair  
 I was cooking rice  
 And I kicked someone by mistake  
 I was plastering the wall  
 And I pushed someone by mistake  
 The boy goes in a litter  
 And he brings back a bride.

This is a Tamadna Game—*tamadna* means ‘to explore with the fingers’. The mother pulls the hair and pushes and tickles the child according to the words of the song.

405

MOTHER Moon, bless baby  
 Let him live a hundred thousand years  
 Moon give him milk and *bāsi*  
 Let it come swaying this way  
 Let it come swaying that way  
 And straight into baby’s mouth.

This song gets its point from its contrasts: the distant moon and the little child, the few months of life and the hundred thousand years, the food coming like an elephant and going straight into baby’s mouth. The last three lines in the original are:

*De re chanda dudh bāsi*  
*Hālat āwe dolat jāwe*  
*Bābu ke muh ma gup le.*

406

*Lutu lutu* are a little baby's ears  
 While his mother is straining rice  
 He puts out the leaves for dinner.

The first line runs—

*Nān kān tura ke lutu lutu kān.*

—which is soothing enough to make any child stop crying.

407

MOTHER, mother, give me salt and *bāsi*  
 O my fat little baby  
 Let me cook the curry first.

*Phodalla tura*, meaning a fat or tubby little baby.

408

SWING baby swing  
 And you'll soon go to sleep  
 Your mother's going to the bazaar  
 She'll bring you *lye* and *phuta*  
 Your mother's going to the forest  
 She'll bring you sihar seeds.

*Lye*, or parched gram, and *phuta*, or 'puffed rice', with sihar seeds, are the simple and readily available luxuries of aboriginal India.

409

WHO would beat you, baby?  
 Swing swing in your cradle.  
 I am going for water  
 I'll give you oil  
 I'll give you scented oil  
 Swing swing in your cradle.  
 What widow's eye has caught you  
 That you cry so much?  
 Swing swing in your cradle.



**SONGS OF MARRIED LIFE**



## RELATIONS

410

BETWEEN the nanand and the bhawaj  
What a happy bond there is  
There is none like it anywhere  
For a while we have been parted  
And I feel like crying  
When I remember her.

The relationship between a girl and her husband's younger sister are particularly intimate and tender. A young wife is a stranger in her husband's house; everyone is very critical; she is being tested and criticized all the time; she generally is nervous and afraid of the new family. But two people, beside her husband, console her. One is her dewar, the husband's younger brother, with whom she has every right to a romantic and humorous connection; the other is her nanand, the younger sister who is probably unmarried and a favourite in the house, and to whom she can turn for support and confidences. The bhawaj in turn is specially affectionate to her nanand and helps her in her love-adventures. Unhappily, this pleasant relationship does not often survive the nanand's marriage. The nanand now goes to live elsewhere, and her visits are—in the opinion of her brother's wife—an economic burden. See No. 412.

411

HER long cloth sweeps the ground  
My husband's young sister  
Her silken jacket tightens  
About her swelling breasts  
When will I be taken to my lord?  
She asks her elder brother's wife  
She says, Let Phagun come  
Then we'll sell the bullock and send you to him  
O the girl's clothes are now so long  
They sweep the ground.

Here the young girl, who was married in her pre-pubertal

period, is now so mature that she has begun to wear a long sari instead of a mere child's loin-cloth and she is longing for the day of her ceremonial *gawan* when she will be sent to live with her husband.

412

THE house was tall as a palace  
 And its face was towards the sun  
 I said to the watchman, O watchman  
 Show me my brother's house  
 But even as I spoke the door was banged  
 My brother heard about it and came from his court  
 O sister, come to my house  
 But I said, O brother I'll not go there  
 Where the door was banged against me  
 But he forced her to come home and his wife said  
 My husband's sister, it was done in fun  
 For we have the right to joke together.

The idea of this song is that a girl who was married as a child comes to her brother's house to arrange the marriage of her son to his daughter. The brother is an important man and his wife is against the match and shuts the door against the visitor. When her husband rebukes her she excuses herself by pointing out that she stands in a joking relationship to her nanand and that she meant nothing by it.

413

LAST week the maina hopped about the court  
 Last week she sat in the threshold  
 Today she has flown away  
 The cat in the house  
 Became a tiger of the jungle  
 And carried her away.

The cat of the house is the husband's younger brother, the dewar, who has a special right to the affections of his bhaiji. The maina is the elder brother's younger wife and the idea of the poem is that wearying of a polygamous household she has run away with the younger brother—an act not approved by tribal sentiment.

414

THE koel sings on the mango branch  
 In the forest calls the peacock  
 Love, do not be angry  
 For I am your dewar  
 While I was with you  
 You were always busy working  
 But just as I am going away  
 You have begun to love me.

415

YES I will come  
 For here is my samdhi  
 And I must meet him  
 The buffaloes' udders are swelling with milk  
 Let them swell  
 For today I must talk to my samdhi  
 The baby at the breast complains  
 Let it complain  
 For today I must talk to my samdhi.

The samdhi are the parents-in-law of a man's child and have an important place in his domestic, social and religious life, as he has in their's. Among people where the cross-cousin marriage is so common, a woman's samdhi is very often her own brother and his visit to her house is a notable and exciting occasion. This poem describes how the duties of every day are neglected for the visitor.

416

COOL is the shade of the pipal  
 By the path that leads up the hill  
 Cool is the marriage haldi  
 But how should I fetch it from another's house  
 When my own house is empty?  
 Return, father, the money you have earned for me  
 Bring a boy here and marry me to him.

This Karma is about a girl who is the only child in her parents' house. There is no son in the family and so she says that her parents should not accept bride-price for her

but they should bring her future husband to live with them  
as a Lamsena.

417

WHO will pay for the milk I gave you?  
Who now will help you on your way?

My father will help me on my way  
I will pay for the milk you gave me  
But let me go, mother, do let me go  
To my wife's country.

What is your father-in-law's country like?  
What sort of man is he?

There are many mango trees  
But few tamarinds  
It is a land of flowing water  
My mother-in-law is a holy shrine  
My father-in-law is Ganges and Jamna.

For ten months I held you in my womb  
Yet you never praised me so  
For four days you stayed with your father-in-law  
And yet you praise him so.

Let me go, mother, let me go  
To my wife's country.

## GRANDMOTHER AND GRAND-DAUGHTER

THE relations between an old man and his grand-daughter (both actual and classificatory) are tender and humorous. Marriage between them is permitted and in rare cases occurs, but any old man addresses the little girl as his wife, his bride, his lover, and is licensed to make any kind of joke about it. Grandmother and grand-daughter are thus 'co-wives' and they too get a lot of fun out of their relationship, which is based on the idea that they are 'sisters': it is, of course, quite in order for a man to marry his wife's younger sister. The following songs illustrate this.

418

CHILD, come and eat a bit of bread.

No, grannie, your grandson will see me  
Just now he gave me *gāli*.

Come, child, I'll tell you something  
Someone told me something and I don't mind telling you  
Jhalmalia gave me this ring for you.

No, grannie, your grandson will ask me  
Where did you get that ring?  
And whatever will I say?

No, hide the ring until bazaar day  
Then bring it out and say  
I've brought it home from the bazaar.

419

WIDOW, giver of sorrow, go to your husband's house  
What are you doing here?

Wanton, you will count ten husbands  
Your beauty is displayed to the whole world  
Bring a broken litter and we'll bid you farewell  
Go to your husband's house  
Take a broken basket, we'll fill it with leaves  
Send for two or four old women  
And we'll bid you farewell.

The grandmother is speaking, jokingly, to the child pretending that they are co-wives and that she is very jealous. A girl is carried in a litter to her husband's house and presents are given in a basket—hence the allusions here.

420

DON'T scold me, grannie  
 I can't bear this rice-gruel  
 I want some *kudai*  
 Some *dallia-pej* and *khichri*.

Three months have gone, child  
 There are no signs yet  
 If it is a boy  
 In five months you'll know  
 If it is a girl  
 In four months it quivers *bog big*  
 Don't go much to the bazaar  
 There are ghosts along the road.

One of the few songs (in this area) about pregnancy. The quickening is generally expected in five months if there is a boy, in four if it is a girl.

## TRYING TO GET MARRIED

421

CHILDREN of four mothers  
Have gone to play together  
But I can't play alone, mother  
I don't know how to play alone.

This rather curious Karma is ostensibly the complaint of an unwanted child, but it may refer to an unmarried girl who sees all her childhood companions married and gone to play in their homes while she herself is left alone.

422

*O ho hai!* In the middle of the path  
Is a creeper heavy with gourds  
I have searched in every creeper  
Every creeper, but I have found nothing.

A Lahaki Karma describing the difficulty of a young man unable to get a wife. In every creeper, which represents the village sprawling on its hill, there are many gourds or girls. A gourd is a favourite symbol of a girl and the people sometimes speak of the *tuma-dudh* or the breasts that are like gourds.

423

WERE you living in the peopled world  
Your daughter would have had her fill  
Of lovers seeking her  
But dwelling in this barren field  
Your daughter sits alone.

This Karma song describes the feelings of a girl who cannot get married because her parents are either living away from the rest of the village or perhaps in a village of people of another tribe. It is quite common to find a single Gond household in the midst of a community of Baiga or one Par-dhan family in a large Gond village. Under such circumstances it is difficult for a girl to find a husband of her own choice.

424

BUY me a cloth to wear  
Worth one rupee at least  
It was that you should care for me  
That I made you my yoke-fellow.

So poor are many of the singers of these songs that it is not unusual for a husband to be unable to give his wife a new sari for at least a year or so after marriage.

## HUSBAND AND WIFE

THE following Dadaria songs reflect the feelings of girls married to elderly men, though the third song appears rather to show the unhappiness of a boy whose parents have married him to a much older woman.

425

A FOOL goes to buy guavas in the bazaar  
Your husband is an old man; how much longer will he live?

426

THE young girl makes her bed  
Weeping she spreads the rags  
And waits for the old man who cannot content her.

427

Do not kill me with false hopes  
We all go to the bazaar  
They buy bangles for their loves  
Their loves are young and beautiful  
But mine is old  
We cut tall bamboo poles  
But sometimes they are thin and useless.

428

DON'T give me food  
But give me delight  
Let me play with you  
Let me play in your court  
Let me play in your lap  
I am only a blue colt  
How can I let you tie me?  
You have made a cot  
But the strings are loose  
You say you love me  
But you don't come near me.

Sometimes when a man is married to a very young girl,

he takes another wife for the period of the girl's immaturity. This song is intended to picture the awakening love of the maturing girl who finds it difficult to divert the attention of her husband from the older woman.

429

WHY do you doubt me?  
 I was only playing the drum  
 Like all the rest  
 If I have betrayed you  
 You may drown me in water  
 Like a bucket in the well  
 If I have betrayed you  
 Henceforth my wheels will run with yours  
 As the cart runs on the road.

Here a husband is defending himself against his wife's jealousy. The conduct of husbands as they beat their drums in the Karma is often the subject of acid comment from their wives. On this occasion the man says that henceforth the wheels of his life will run as smoothly along with hers as a cart runs on the road.

430

My *jori*, my *jori*  
 Take me with you, my *jāwar-jori*  
 Make me your companion  
 On your new journey  
 Where will I find you again?,  
 My *jori*, my *jori*  
 The memory of your words  
 Impales my heart  
 My *jori*, my *jori*.

It is not possible to translate adequately the words *jori* meaning yoke-fellow, friend, ally and above all husband or wife, and *jāwar-jori*, which means in this context a friend of the same age, sharing the same interests and delights.

The reference to the impalement of the heart is connected in the minds of these people with the punishments inflicted by the Moghals on their prisoners whom they sometimes impaled on stakes.

## 431

*O ho re ho!* Sweet is the mango and the tamarind  
 Sweet is the sugar-cane  
 But sweetest of all is your own yoke-fellow  
 Who shares the throne with you.

The mango and other fruits are often used to describe women friends. The *āma-dudh* or mango-breasts are very much admired. The word we have translated yoke-fellow is *jori* which is often used both for a lover who expects an attachment to become permanent or for a husband and wife. A *jori* is something definitely more than a casual attraction. It is the person in whose company one will pull the heavy plough of life.

## 432

YOUR husband dances on your breasts  
 And your lover dances in your eyes  
 Send him messages  
 Send all over the village  
 Begging him to come  
 But there is no news of him.

## 433

THE man you marry lasts you all your life  
 But those who secretly break through the fence  
 Will only stay so long as they get something.

## 434

BEND it as you will  
 The cut bamboo  
 Why then seek favour  
 From another's love.

Once the bamboo is cut and belongs to a man he can do what he likes with it. So once a woman is married and belongs to her husband he can bend her as he desires. In the song a wife reminds her husband of this and points out that when he has a bamboo to bend at his will, what need is there of seeking other pleasures?

## 435

Sit on a seat and braid your hair  
May your mother's house burn down  
Who has given me this fate?  
Put oil in an earthen pot  
And sitting sitting my fair wife  
Part your hair properly  
May your mother's house burn down.

## 436

WALKING walking walking  
My feet are worn to shreds  
Working working working  
My life is turned to dust  
But look at my life, my girl  
How happily she sits at home.

These two songs illustrate the feelings of an over-worked husband who believes, probably quite wrongly, that he is doing all the work and his wife merely wasting her time at home.

## THE POLYGAMOUS HOME

437

EVEN without your calling me  
Would I not come to see you?  
When the fruit is ripe  
The parrot nods and signs  
But the girl with oval face  
Gets angry with me  
Fie on the *thak thak*  
Of fighting buffaloes  
Fie on the angry glances  
Of a pair of wives  
They sleep apart on the white white sheets  
While I spend a night of sorrow.

This is a Karma song about the relations between two co-wives. It is addressed apparently to the elder wife who is the parrot signing to the singer to visit her. His younger wife, the girl with the slim figure and oval face, is angry. The *thak thak* represents the noise made by the clashing horns of two buffaloes when they fight.

438

RUST destroys the wheat  
She has destroyed your love for me  
How I long to cover you  
As the moon is hid by clouds  
How I long to take you  
All to myself  
As a mother takes her child.

The elder of two wives, whose love for her husband has survived his venture into polygamy, is the supposed singer of this song.

439

COULD I remove the stones from the river?  
 Could I steal the beauty from your face?  
 Could a silver ring turn into copper?  
 Another's wife cannot content you  
 For she is brief as the twilight  
 I will hide you, hide your very name  
 So I may have you ever for myself.

Here again it is the wife who sings, but in this case her husband has not married again, but is unfaithful. The desire, rather pathetically revealed in both these songs, to possess a man completely is characteristic of Gond and Par-dhan women.

440

FINE clothes have come for you  
 From your new wife's father  
 Put them on, put them on  
 My splendid bridegroom  
 What a picture you will be  
 A wedding crown has come for you  
 From your new wife's father  
 Put it on, put it on  
 My splendid bridegroom  
 What a picture you will be  
 A fine red turban has come for you  
 From your new wife's father  
 Put it on, put it on  
 My splendid bridegroom  
 What a picture you will be.

This is the song of a jealous elder wife whose husband is essaying the dangerous adventure of polygamy. *Hajāri dulha kya chhāpa lāgi re*. The husband, literally, is fine as a photograph (*chhāpa*) or probably a coloured print of Krishna. *Hajāri* is a word used in both flattery and derision. It can mean 'son of a thousand fathers' or 'son of a marriage that cost a thousand rupees'.

## STERILITY

441

YOUR red skirt swings *lahang-luhung*  
The parting of your hair  
Is red like the centipede  
Like a red bead is your husband  
Has not your red flower blossomed?  
How is there still no fruit?  
Your legs are strong as pillars  
And shine like yellow haldi  
Your hair smells of ajawain  
The incense of your cloves  
Fills the world  
Has not your red flower blossomed?  
How is there still *no* fruit?

This song, addressed to a beautiful but still childless girl, is full of fertility symbols. The 'blossoming of the red flower' is the onset of menstruation; the fruit is a child. The pillars are perhaps the poles of the marriage-booth; the haldi is the yellow paste with which bride and bridegroom are anointed. Ajawain and cloves are often used at the time of a woman's delivery. For the colour-symbolism, see No. 180.

442

Do not cultivate a barren field  
Or your bullocks will die  
Your bullocks will sit useless  
Do not marry a barren girl  
Do not, do not  
For her life goes to waste.  
Marry a good and fruitful girl  
Who will bear a son.

## FERTILITY

443

O MOTHER, do not again give me a woman's birth  
From the beginning there is great suffering for women  
O Mother, in the shadow of the twelfth year  
My head was found defiled and soon I was pregnant  
The first month is over, Mother  
The blood gathers drop by drop  
The second month is over, Mother  
In the shadow of the third month  
My body is yellow as haldi  
And I long for buttermilk  
My hands and feet are heavy as earth  
I cannot bear the sun  
O Mother, do not again give me a woman's birth  
The fourth month is over, Mother  
In the fifth month the life comes *phud phud*  
My body feels lighter than before  
In the shadow of the sixth month  
My body begins to look big  
My mind thinks, what shall I eat  
And what shall I avoid?  
But to no one can I tell my desire  
The seventh month is over, Mother  
The child born in the seventh month  
Can hardly live  
The child born in the eighth month  
Is sure to die  
Under the shadow of the ninth month  
The children of all the world are born.

Songs about fertility and pregnancy are common among the Kawar, but are rather unusual among the Gond and Par-dhan. W. G. Archer gives an interesting Uraon song about 'the carving of the eight parts', the development of the body after its conception by the parents.

Image image image, babu  
Image of a face with hair  
When was the carving of the eight parts?  
Of the father its creation  
Of the mother was its birth  
Out of the future were the eight parts.

444

KOEL, why do you look so downcast?  
Why did you go to my nest?  
What knife did you use to cut the cord?  
What pot did you use to bathe?  
I cut the cord with a golden knife  
I bathed in a silver pot.

This song is addressed by a crow to a koel (the Indian cuckoo) which has laid an egg in her nest. The Pardhan attitude to the cuckoo is more sympathetic than that common in Europe; she is regarded as rather pathetic because she cannot hatch her own eggs and rear her own chicks. The knife and the bathing-pot are part of the usual apparatus of human birth.

## EXCOMMUNICATION

THESE three songs are concerned with the danger of excommunication from tribal privileges which is the penalty of those who allow their affections to stray outside the circle of their own tribe or caste. In the first song the condition of being excommunicate is symbolized by old age. The girl who is content to play and dance in her parents' kingdom and to marry according to their wishes is happy, but by following her own will she finds nothing but sorrow. In the second song we see how a Gond girl who married a Dhobi failed to find happiness. In the third a youth is proposing to a girl of another caste that she should run away with him.

445

OLD age has come, my head is shaking  
Sitting on a stool my mind repents too late  
I have no mother now, no brother and no family  
No one will take me into their home  
Sitting on a stool I think  
Too late, I think again  
Life has become sorrow  
More than can be borne  
O earth, break open and take me in.  
In my parents' kingdom  
I played and danced  
But in my own kingdom there is sorrow  
O earth, break open and take me in.

446

I DREAMED about the Anjni bazaar  
I saw a boy wearing a red-bordered cloth  
And a tightly-tied turban  
I could not love my own caste and blood  
So I got this Dhobi's son  
But however low your caste may be  
There's nothing like your own  
However spotless is the moon  
It cannot turn night to day.

My Rani, how long are we to meet  
In dried-up rivulets  
How long is this life of theft to last?  
The Raja will fine us cowries  
The tribe will demand a feast of rice  
But take my hand and we'll settle it afterwards  
Put on your ornaments and we'll arrange it afterwards  
We go to catch fish  
And we get a tortoise  
I'll give them a calf, and if that is not enough  
I'll give them money.

Compare Herrick—

And must we part, because some say,  
Loud is our love, and loose our play,  
And more than well becomes the day?  
Alas for pitty! and for us  
Most innocent, and injur'd thus.  
Had we kept close, or play'd within,  
Suspition now had been the sinne,  
And shame had follow'd long ere this,  
T'ave plagu'd, what now unpunisht is.

A CROW has caught the parrot  
Save it with your charms  
There are spies who watch the parrot  
There are guards who watch it  
Save it with your charms.

It is possible that this song means that a girl, symbolized as usual as a parrot, is in danger of being outcasted and the other members of the tribe, the spies and guards, are going to penalize her for her association with the crow, probably a man of another tribe.

My sinful life burns  
 My eyes shed water  
 O God, who made her beauty  
 Make an image of her  
 And give it to me  
 My love is far away  
 I stand on the bank of Jamna  
 Now it will be hard to meet her  
 Now chains have been fastened on my feet  
 O God, who made her beauty  
 Give me her beauty's image.

This song apparently describes a man who has been out-casted and who has gone, as the custom is sometimes, to Allahabad for purification on the banks of the Ganges or Jamna. His girl was evidently of another and probably inferior tribe and he reflects how hard it will be, now that the chains of caste are re-fastened on his feet, to meet her again.

YOUR new bride  
 Has a black jacket  
 And a black bag  
 But why is the Raja  
 Looking so miserable?

A man's former lover is taunting him. He has given his new wife everything she wants, but he himself has got nothing out of it.

WITHOUT my love I am defeated  
 My life keeps on thinking thinking  
 I cooked little gram-cakes for him  
 I made a dish of finest rice  
 His mother is nursing the baby  
 His little sister is fetching water  
 His elder sister is serving food  
 But her mind is full of him  
 Without my love I am defeated.

In this Karma we have a picture of a girl whose husband has eloped and probably gone to the Tea Gardens. The wife is in despair, but the whole household is trying to keep up appearances and to go on with their ordinary work until all hope of his return is lost.

452

GIRL, what do I understand?  
I am but a witless boy  
What do I understand?  
I have brought fish  
Make it into curry  
Tell my child's mother  
Not to be sad  
For I am but a witless boy  
What do I understand?

This is one of those highly condensed Karma which can hardly be understood apart from the commentary of those who sing it. It is said to describe a youth so young that he is unable to bear the responsibilities of marriage, just able to bring a little fish for the day's meal but knowing nothing of life and then he suddenly finds that he has a baby to look after and all a father's duties.

453

No one stands by in trouble  
For everyone is afraid  
Even if it be a slender girl  
Standing frightened  
And tears falling from her dark eyes.

This Karma probably describes a scene where the police are arresting a girl's husband and no one dares come forward to help her for fear that they too will get into trouble.

How young I was  
When I planted the mango  
And the tamarind  
And still their leaves are full of life  
But there is none in my old body.

It is considered both meritorious and exciting to plant trees. The Gond or Pardhan who does this generally has a great desire to perpetuate his name, and looks forward to a prosperous old age. In the poem the old man who planted mango and tamarind trees in his youth finds himself jealous of the vigour of their fresh green leaves and compares it to the lack of strength and life in his own limbs.

**MOURNING SONGS**



## MOURNING SONGS

THE thought of change and decay, of death and mortality is constantly present to the aboriginal mind. Life is short, 'it lasts only for two days' and every child is familiar with the sight of death and the melancholy ritual of the disposal of the body. It is curious how often sententious songs about the transitoriness of life and the loneliness of death are sung to the gayest Karma dance tunes and movements.

After this life of two days is passed  
We must travel onward alone.

Again and again the gay children swinging to and fro in the rhythm of the dance foretell the day when,

On my chest grass will grow  
My bones will burn like jungle wood  
And my hair like jungle grass.

They delight in reflecting how this warm and breathing loveliness of human flesh will pass away—

455

WHAT is man's body? It is a spark from the fire  
It meets water and it is put out.  
What is man's body? It is a bit of straw  
It meets fire and it is burnt.  
What is man's body? It is a bubble of water  
Broken by the wind.

The real mourning of the aboriginal, however, is to be found in the often beautiful and moving spontaneous poems that are sung by the bereaved husband and wife, parent or child, on the day of a loved one's death. Such songs are not, of course, altogether spontaneous. As for love-making, so for death, there is a great reservoir of poetic clichés on which the singer can draw, rearranging his material to suit the circumstances. But often, too, where grief is deep and genuine—as it usually is—the singer produces from the strength of intense emotion some beautiful images and ideas.

456

My little son  
 Where have they hidden you?  
 My little son  
 Have they put you behind the grain-bin?  
 Have they hidden you down in the wheat-field?  
 Have they taken you to the forest  
 And covered you with leaves?  
 O where have they hidden you  
 My little son?

457

My father  
 Where have you flown away, my father?  
 Where will I see you again?  
 Whom will I call father now?  
 Who will care for your orphan boy and girl?  
 You have left us alone in Banbrinda  
 Where are you hiding?  
 Who will live in your house?  
 How suddenly you orphaned us.  
 Where are you hiding  
 My father?

458

My son, while you lived I was a queen  
 For you lay between my breasts  
 As on a royal throne  
 But now you are dead  
 I must lay you  
 In the hard ground.

459

So long as my lord breathed  
 I lived upon the throne  
 But since he died  
 How worthless are my bangles  
 And the world is empty.

The song of a widow. A woman's bangles are broken after her husband's death and sometimes thrown into his grave.

460

O THEY will carry you away, and your soul will weep.

The hammer says, Listen, O Agaria, do not make me  
 Tomorrow or the day after you will die  
 And then who will use me to strike the iron ?  
 O they will carry you away, and your soul will weep.

The pick says, Listen, O Agaria, do not make me  
 Tomorrow or the day after you will die  
 And I shall be used to dig your grave  
 O they will carry you away, and your soul will weep.

461

THE depths of sorrow in tears have not been measured  
 The mountains and the hills will pass away  
 Like flooded rivers and streams, tears may flow  
 But what your destiny has given you must accept  
 Brother, were I a tear-drop I would fall like flooded waters  
 For the deep limits of sorrow's tears are not yet found.

462

SHE is very beautiful  
 But her young breasts are fallen  
 He fondles them no longer  
 That once were his loved playthings  
 Youth passes quickly, quickly  
 But a girl's youth endures  
 The shortest time of all.

Compare Daniel's poem beginning 'Enjoy thy April now',  
 and especially the stanza—

Fair is the lily, fair  
 The rose, of flowers the eye;  
 Both wither in the air,  
 Their beauteous colours die :  
 And so at length shall lie  
 Deprived of former grace,  
 The lilies of thy breasts, the roses of thy face.

463

TAKE a golden comb  
 Bathe in shining water  
 Look at your body in the glass  
 The body is made of earth  
 It will be mingled with earth again  
 Were it made of bell-metal  
 You could change it for another  
 Were it made of copper  
 You could change it for another  
 But no man can change  
 His earthen body.

464

WHEN they take the body from the village  
 The place is lonely  
 We give it company to the burial-ground  
 The goose flies on alone  
 You gathered stones  
 And made a palace  
 People said, He has a house  
 But the house was not yours  
 The house was not mine  
 Our stay here is like a bird's flight.

465

KEEP your body well  
 There is great sadness for the body  
 The good man's body is taken in a chariot  
 The wicked man's body is dragged on the ground  
 Not even the vultures eat it  
 There is great sadness for the body.

466

BRING a sickle. Bring a knife  
 Cut fifty bundles of grass  
 Build a little hut in the middle of the road  
 Do not worry about your body  
 Tear your cloth and make it into paper  
 Take kajal from your eyes and make it into ink.

467

WHERE has your diamond-body gone?  
 As a child games delighted you  
 You danced and played in the open air  
 Then you came in and ate what you desired  
 Childhood passed and youth came  
 Love filled your eyes  
 And carried away the memory of home  
 Youth passed and old age came  
 Your skin withered and you reaped  
 The fruit of youth.

468

THE singhan brinjal is chopped to pieces  
 The marigold has fallen on the ground  
 Now no one looks at them  
 The marigold has fallen on the ground.

The singhan brinjal is considered very beautiful, but once it is cut up for dinner no one looks at it. The marigold, especially when it is in the hair of a girl, is very charming but once it falls to the ground it is of no account.

469

My sinful life is filled with misery  
 Where should it seek comfort?  
 For the house is no more a home for me  
 And the village is bare as a hill.

470

ASK no questions of your sadness  
 For that spoils your life.  
 In your mind why do you ponder?  
 Why search through your memory?  
 Do not think, do not remember  
 Ask no questions of your sadness  
 For that ruins your life.

471

SHE goes with her pot for water  
 But who can tell the sorrow of her heart?



**SONGS OF CRAFT AND LABOUR**



## SONGS OF CRAFT AND LABOUR

THE Gond and Pardhan are accustomed to singing any of their usual songs, even dance songs like the Karma, while they are at work. A girl may, for example, sing any one of the songs included under the heading of 'Love Songs' in this book while she is husking rice or grinding wheat. There are, however, a few songs which refer specifically to household tasks, village industries and the work of the fields, and we give specimens of these in this Section.

The first group of songs, which are used by women while they husk rice or the smaller millets with the long heavy pestle in a mortar buried in the ground, celebrate the virtues of the winnowing-fan, the broom and the rice-pounder. The winnowing-fan is everywhere associated with magic. In the Maikal Hills it is used by the Gunia for divination. Sticks taken from a broom are also used for the same magic purpose, and there is generally an idea that the broom sweeps poverty and disease out of the house. Brooms are collected and taken to the boundary at ceremonies for the purification of a village.

The rice-husker also has magical significance. It is waved round the heads of bride and bridegroom during a marriage. Crooke has an interesting note on its use. 'In Bengal, it is worshipped when the child is first fed with grain. And there is a regular worship of it in the month of Baisakh, or May. The top is smeared with red lead, anointed with oil, and offerings of rice and holy durva grass are made to it. The worship has even been provided with a Brahmanical legend. A Guru once ordered his disciple to pronounce the word *Dhenk* at least one hundred and eight times a day. Narada Muni was so pleased with his devotion, as he is the patron deity of the rice-pounder, that he paid him a visit riding on one, and carried off his votary to heaven.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Crooke, ii, 191.

## SONGS SUNG DURING THE HUSKING OF RICE

472

RICE-HUSKER, rice-husker, you are the wisest of us all  
Were you not here how would our lovely wives  
Prepare the rice for food?  
Of what is the rice-husker made, of what is the mortar?  
Of gold is the rice-husker, of silver is the mortar.  
Who does the pounding, who sifts the grain below?  
The Raja does the pounding, the Rani sifts the grain.

This song describes the husking of rice with the hand-husker where a man or woman pounds the grain with a heavy wooden implement into the mortar set in the ground. Here the man is represented as husking while his wife sits sweeping back with her hands into the hole the grain that has been thrown out by the husker.

473

I AM the fan the fan  
If you could not clean the grain  
You might husk for ever  
But without my help you would get nothing  
*Dhok dhik dhok dhik*  
I am the broom the broom  
You may clean and sift the grain  
But if I don't gather it  
You will get nothing  
*Dhok dhik dhok dhik.*

During this song, whose refrain represents the noise made by the heavy husker which is worked by feet, a boy lies on his face pretending to be the husker. First he raises his feet up and down, then his buttocks and then his head. While he does this a woman goes round and round him fanning him with a winnowing-fan.

474

SLEEP comes easily  
When you've enjoyed your supper  
But when I don't talk to my bird  
I lie awake weeping  
The mango flowers against the sky  
If I catch you  
I'll keep you carefully  
You catch fish with a net  
But only in a girl  
Can your life live always  
How can I shake the mango branch?  
For you are standing  
In another's garden, my beloved.

475

O THE water of the well  
And your pot by the well  
How they envy you and me  
Stand a little way away  
From far your friend  
Helps you in drawing water  
Afar afar your watcher watches you.

476

ARE you going to husk the rice?  
Or are you going to stay all day  
Stuck by the pillar?  
Golden is the flower in the river-bed  
Pick it and go to your house  
You must husk the rice so well  
That there is no rubbish left  
And the rice is not broken  
Or are you going to stay idle  
Standing by the pillar?

477

THE mortar quivers, down the pestle comes  
O beautiful pestle  
If I were not here, I the winnowing fan  
How would your pretty wife clean the grain?

If I were not here, I the broom  
 How would your pretty wife clear the floor?  
 If I were not here, I the measure  
 How would your pretty wife measure the grain?  
 If I were not here, I the pestle  
 How would your pretty wife husk the rice?  
 If I were not here, I the pot  
 How would your pretty wife cook the grain?  
 The mortar quivers, down the pestle comes  
 O beautiful pestle.

## 478

O LOVELY pestle, even Krishna dances  
 When my love is husking grain  
 Pestle, you are wisest of all  
 Were you not here  
 How would we husk our beautiful grain?  
 Winnowing-fan, you are wisest of all  
 Were you not here  
 How would we winnow our beautiful grain?  
 Measure, you are wisest of all  
 Were you not here  
 How would we measure our beautiful grain?  
 O lovely pestle, even Krishna dances  
 When my love is husking grain.

## 479

KODAI, all the world desires you  
 There is no pulse like rahar dal  
 There is no grain like kodai  
 With a little ghee on top.  
 Kodai, all the world desires you  
 The poor eat you  
 The rich eat you  
 You keep the whole world healthy  
 Without you the world would perish  
 Kodai, all the world desires you.

480

RICE says, I am the wealth of man  
I am their golden stick with silver point.

Says Kodon, I am born in a field  
That is easy to prepare.

Rahar Pulse says, I am but a little shrub  
Yet I drive away man's sadness.

Castor tree says, They all think me lazy  
Yet I make their torches burn.

Masur Pulse says, I am ugly on the stalk  
But undress me and see how beautiful I am.

The Beans say, We are scattered all about  
But our master will collect us.

Sesamum says, I am very little  
Yet I climb the head  
And do the parting of the hair.

Arsi says, I look bald  
Yet they fry their cakes in my oil.

481

IN the middle of our garden  
There is a grove of mangoes  
My uncle and my brother  
Have come to visit me there  
Go, my husband, with a bundle of tobacco  
I stand to watch them in my door  
How often I come to the door  
To watch them on any excuse  
In my garden is an elephant  
How proud they will be to see it.

In this Grinding Song a girl imagines her uncle and brother have come to visit her and thus relieve the monotony of work in her husband's house, where she is under the rule of not always sympathetic parents-in-law. These visits of relatives are of great importance and give constant delight in the rather uneventful course of village life.

I AM husking kutki  
I am husking kodon  
I am husking mahua, sister  
I am going to give my husband  
Mahua sweets, sister.

I am grinding rice  
I am grinding urid  
Mixing them with oil  
I will make bread, sister  
There's a marriage in the village  
I'm going there to give them bread.

## WEEDING SONGS

483

THE goodwife had twelve ploughmen and twelve girls to  
weed for her.

*Tari nāke nāna wo sāsake tari nāke nāno wo.*

'What rice should I cook, mother-in-law, what curry should  
I prepare?

Will you warm the child while I cook, for he is crying.'

'What? I warm your child, daughter-in-law?  
I would rather care for any other baby.'

'Come, baby, I will warm you, for you are the real master  
Of the twelve ploughmen and the twelve weeding girls.'  
She takes the baby in her arms. 'Don't cry baby, don't  
cry.'

But while she warms the baby and feeds it with her milk,  
It grows very late, and the men will be hungry.

'Take him, mother-in-law, while I cook the rice.'

When she hears this the goodwife begins to quarrel,  
'Are you the only woman in the world with a child?'

'Don't cry baby, I'll swing you in the cradle,  
Let your grannie give galī; I'll swing you to and fro.'

She cleans the house with cow-dung; she burnishes the pots;  
Down to the well she goes for water.

'Do swing the child, mother-in-law, I am going for water.'

She brings one load, she brings two loads,  
Seven pots above each other,  
And one below her arm.

But as she comes the maiden weeps in her mind;  
In tears she lights the fire;  
As it burns up she puts the water on to boil.

'What shall I cook, mother-in-law?'

'Make three-quarters of a seer of pej  
And a pinch of vegetable, daughter-in-law.'

'But there are twelve ploughmen and twelve weeding girls  
How will this suffice them?'

She puts half a paili of rice, she prepares half a paili of pej;  
She puts it on the fire to cook in the pan;

She goes to the garden to pick the vegetable.

She brings a pinch of vegetable between her two fingers;  
She puts it on the fire to cook in the pan.

That pinch between her fingers fills the pan;  
The half paili of pej fills the pot;

The half paili of rice fills the dauri basket.

When it is ready the girl sits down to make the leaf-cups;  
With bits of bamboo she stitches the leaf-plates.

‘Don’t cry, baby, don’t cry.’ She feeds him with her milk.  
‘I am going to give pej to the twelve ploughmen  
And the twelve weeding girls. Don’t cry, baby, any more.’

She soothes him to sleep and puts him in the cradle;  
She takes down the basket with her ornaments and cloth;  
She puts on all her ornaments and the parrot-braided sari.  
Splendid in her ornaments she goes to the fields.

Her tears falling *dar dar*, she goes to Kajli Kachhar.  
She walks one kos, she walks two kos

Like the bright sun, she goes shining *luk luk*.

She has reached Kajli Kachhar where the twelve ploughmen  
are,

And the twelve girls are weeding in the field.

‘Come, come, father-in-law and drink your pej.’

‘Daughter-in-law, you have brought pej, but where is the  
water?’

There is water in a cocoon, she puts it on the ground.

‘Daughter-in-law, with this we can’t even rinse our mouths.’

Seeing the cocoon, the ploughmen grew angry.

‘There are twelve of us, how can this suffice?’

But father-in-law began to bathe in the water

And the water was not finished.

All the twelve bathed, but the water was not finished.

She fed them all, but there was no rice or pej for her.

She thinks in her mind and asks herself,

‘O mother, if I go home there will be no food there for me.’

Through hunger she is swaying *larang tarang*.

She picks up her pots and goes to the deep pool of the Koeli  
River.

When she reaches the bank she weeps loudly.

‘O mother river, I will die here, I will not go home.

Devour me, deep pool of Koeli, make food of me.'  
 'Go home, daughter, go home', says the deep pool of Koeli.  
 'There is torment in the house, there are endless quarrels,  
 mother.  
 I will die here, I will not go home.'  
 She enters the water up to her ankles, but the water runs  
 from her.  
 She enters the river to the waist. 'O mother, devour me.'  
 Slowly slowly the maiden goes till the water is to her head.  
 Bearing her golden pot, she goes below the water.  
 Now she is drowned and sees the Water Maiden.  
 The Water Maiden makes her sit on a golden stool.  
 'Why have you come here, grand-daughter?'

In the fields the husband feels his eye twitching.  
 'Father, why is my eye twitching? What sorrow is on its  
 way to us?  
 O elder brother, look to the bullocks, I am going home.'  
 All the other ploughmen and the women came home.  
 'Mother, where is your daughter-in-law?'  
 'She said she was going to her mother's house;  
 She took you the pej, but she has not come back.'  
 The Raja went to the swing and took up his child.  
 'Son, where has your mother gone? Mother, it's dark now.  
 The child will not stay with anyone. How will we spend  
 the night?'  
 'Sleep, baby, your father will go to find your mother.'  
 He dressed and took the road to her mother's house.  
 He went one kos, he went two kos.  
 As he goes his tears fall like gold to the ground.  
 Weeping and singing he crosses hills and mountains.  
 One mind was weeping, the other two minds were weeping.  
 He reached his sasural. As his mother-in-law saw him  
 coming,  
 She came out with a pot of water and a dish to wash his  
 feet.  
 'My darling son-in-law, my father, has come. I will wash  
 his feet.'  
*Nari na ke nāna re beta nari na ke nāna re.*  
 After washing his feet, the Rani gave him a stool;  
 She gave him a hookah of tobacco. 'Smoke this, my son.'

Is my daughter well? Give me a message from my grand-  
son'.

As she asked he began to cry, his tears fell *dhar dhar*.  
The mother-in-law began to weep with him.

'When I went to my mother and asked her where her  
daughter-in-law was,

She told me she had come to her mother's house,  
But my child is weeping, all night I held him in my arms.  
At last I put him to sleep and now I've come to you.'

'Son, first eat your food and then we'll find my daughter.'  
'Until we search for her, I will not take my food.'

'When you find her, son, don't beat her or be angry.  
Please her and be nice to her, take her to your house.  
How often I told her, my pearl, not to leave your house.  
O my pearl, why did you not mind my word?  
Inside me my heart is weeping, father, it is going to break.'

The Raja touched the feet of his mother-in-law and she  
kissed him,  
And said, 'Live for age after age my son, live for a hundred  
thousand years  
And may your turban be eternal.'

He leaves the village, soon he has reached the forest.  
He walks one kos, he walks two kos, but his eyes are blind  
with hunger.

He has left the right path and begins to wander through  
the jungle.

The Raja stumbles over stumps and stones.  
The throne of the gods begins to tremble in the sky,  
'Go go, Divine Wind, and search the earth, for someone is  
in trouble.'

The Divine Wind came down to earth *sur sur*.  
She searched village after village, she looked in one, she  
looked in another.

She saw the weeping child with drooping face.  
She turned to the path leading to the jungle.  
Were she a human being how long the way would take!  
But in one minute the Wind has reached the jungle,  
Where the Raja had wandered now eight days and nine  
nights.

The Wind saw his trouble and returned to Bhagavan.

When he heard what had happened, Bhagavan with stick  
in hand began to climb down to earth.

In a moment he reached the Raja in the jungle.  
*Tari na ke nāna re dāda tari na ke nāna ho.*

Bhagavan stood in front of the Raja and asked him,  
'What place do you come from? Tell me, brother. I will  
be the guru and you the chela.'

'Father, my eyes cannot see. How can I be your chela?  
But if I find my yoke-fellow, the next morning I will become  
your chela.'

Bhagavan gave him the water of life to drink.

'Now my eyes are open, father. I will never leave you.'

'Come to the lake my son and there I will speak a mantra  
in your ear.'

I will be the father, and you will be my son.'

In front went Bhagavan, behind walked the Raja.

Bhagavan took him to the deep pool of Koeli.

By the edge of the water they sat and Bhagavan cried,  
'Here is my blessing. Come out, come out, my pearl, for  
your son is crying.'

Your little son is weeping, Motin, I will speak a mantra  
in your ear.'

Motin was sitting on a golden stool and weeping tears of  
gold.

'Motin, your husband from childhood might have died  
As he fell over the rocks in the jungle.'

Weeping the girl came from the water with the aid of a  
rope.

'Farewell, farewell, sister of the water, you have saved my  
life.'

Through the deep waters Motin came.

When he saw her the husband began to weep *dhar dhar*.

She saluted Bhagavan and he asked her,

'What sadness has befallen you?' And so she told her  
story.

'You will have no more trouble, Motin.

Hereafter there will be maidens to care for you,

In a golden swing they will rock you to and fro.

Seven maids will swing you, Motin, seven maids will swing  
you.

Seven maids will do your work for you.'

'But is my baby living or no, my father?'  
 Bhagavan gives her in a bottle the water of life.  
 'Let him drink this daughter, for greater folk have drunk  
 and lived again.'  
 So saying the God began to disappear and when she turned  
 he was no longer there.

With five saris Jal Kaina has come out of the water and  
 gives the Raja a golden stool to sit on.  
 'Live in peace, brother, my little sister had come to see  
 me.'

Go go, my little sister, for your baby must be weeping.'  
 As Motin touched the feet of Jal Kaina, she said,  
 'Live long, daughter, come again to see me.'  
 Her body turned to silver and her hair to gold.  
 Motin took her saris and went with her pot carried on her  
 head,  
 She walked behind her Raja.  
 They walked one kos, they walked two kos, and at last they  
 reached their house.

When mother-in-law saw her she began to give her gali.  
 'Why have you brought her to my house, my son,  
 This untouchable girl who had run away?'  
 But Motin took no notice and went straight to her baby.  
 As she tried to take him from the swing, the child seemed  
 dead.  
 It lay with teeth clenched and the mother wept loudly.  
 'Why did I not die instead of you, my child?'  
 She forced open his mouth and poured the water of life down  
 his throat.  
 At once the child opened its eyes and began to cry *mutur*  
*mutur*.

Motin took the child in her lap and gave him her breast,  
 But when mother-in-law saw it she came with a stick.

'This witch, this devil, my son, you have sought and  
 brought back home.'  
 She gave her one blow, she gave two blows.  
 The son was watching, he took out his sword;  
 He rushed at her and cut her neck  
 As if he were offering her in sacrifice.  
 On one side lay the head, on the other lay the body.  
 The girl saw it and thought, 'O mother-in-law,

You have been sacrificed for my sake.'

She took the head and body and tried to put them together.  
She made her drink the sacred water.

The old woman revived, saying '*Rame Rame*.

I did not understand, my daughter, and that was why I beat  
you.'

She kisses her, holding her face between her hands.

Now she goes to her son and kisses him.

'Go go, my son, and bring maid-servants for her.

Such a daughter-in-law I have never seen in all the world.  
Make her sit in a golden swing and swing her to and fro.'  
Mother-in-law went out and brought seven maid-servants for  
her.

They used to swing her to and fro. Another seven did all  
the work of the house.

The old woman took her grandson in her arms and carried  
him.

'O son, because of you I have had this happiness.'

She used to go dancing from place to place.

With hot and cold water the servants bathed the girl;

And after bathing she would wear the sari given by Jal  
Kaina.

When she put on that sari, the whole house was filled with  
light,

And that mud house was turned to gold.

Daughter and son sat together to eat from a golden dish.

When she had had her food they took her to the swing.

She took her child with her and rocked him in the swing.

As they were happy, so may happiness be ours!

The close connexion between folk-tale and folk-song, between 'poetry' and 'prose' is illustrated by the fact that in many folk-tales the dialogue is in verse and is sung by the narrator. A number of songs also are based on the folk-tales and cannot be understood apart from them. The following Weeding Song sung by women during the heavy task of clearing the rice-fields of weeds during the rains depends on the story of Banelin.

## 484

ALAS, alas, O Goddess, what misfortune has brought me here?  
 Standing in the field Banelin weeps.  
 At home mother-in-law torments me,  
 At home my sisters-in-law abuse me,  
 In the jungle my husband bullies me.  
 Alas, alas, O Goddess.  
 For twelve years have I cleared away the cow-dung,  
 But mother-in-law is never pleased,  
 Sister-in-law is never pleased,  
 Husband is never pleased.  
 They snatch the dung out of my hands  
 And beat me with it.  
 Standing in the field Banelin weeps.  
 For twelve years I have swept the yard,  
 But they snatch the broom out of my hands  
 And beat me with it.  
 For twelve years I have brought water for the house  
 But they snatch away my gundri  
 And beat me with it.  
 Standing in the field Banelin weeps.

The scene now changes from the field to the well and Banelin is pictured standing by the well and asking the animals whether they are as unhappy as she.

O Bhuli, are you a happy dog  
 Or do you live in sorrow?  
 Banelin, all night I must keep watch  
 And all day long I go to hunt.  
 O Duda, are you a happy bullock  
 Or do you live in sorrow?  
 Banelin, all day I am at the plough  
 And all night long  
 I must work the Teli's oil-press.

The story behind this song is of a girl from a town who has married a poor husbandman in a village. Her parents give her a dog, Bhuli, and a hornless bullock, Duda. After living a miserable life in the unfamiliar surroundings of the village, exposed to the hostility of her mother-in-law and the impatience of her husband, the girl runs away with her dog and her bullock. After a time they reach a city where a Dano has devoured the inhabitants and has collected in his palace all the gold and silver and precious stones of the place. He looks after a great herd of cows and spends his time turning over his possessions. Banelin reaches the city and hides.

That night the Dano has cooked rice and pulse and Bhuli goes and steals it. The next night the Dano prepares khir and Duda goes and steals it. After several days, finding his supper disappearing every evening the Dano gets very angry and decides that his right hand must have stolen the rice and eaten it and his left hand must have stolen the khir and eaten it. In a temper he heats a great pot of oil and punishes his two hands by plunging them into it. Then he accuses each part of his body in turn, puts it into the boiling oil and thus slowly kills himself.

Banelin then becomes the Rani of the city and brings people from all over the world to live there. One day her husband and his family come to sell wood. She recognizes them and employs them in a menial capacity in the palace.

The women who sing the song of Banelin remember her early unhappiness and the wonderful fortune that befell her and as they sing they are said to pray that a similar happy lot may be theirs.

485

To the Ganges the fawn  
Has come to drink water  
Part of it was his own doing  
Part was his fate  
And part the common lot of men  
O crow, you have spoken  
Like Fortune itself  
But what can I do?

This obscure song can only be understood by reference to the story on which it depends. Long ago a beautiful girl was married to a youth who lived far away across the mountains. When the marriage was over she started back with her husband to his home. As they went along they reached a flooded river on whose bank was lying the dead body of a woman. In a tree above the crows were talking to one another about the corpse. Now the girl had the gift of understanding the language of birds and she overheard the crow say, 'Inside that body there is a lovely boy. If anyone is brave enough to cut him out of the belly, he will bring good luck'. The girl was very excited at hearing this but was afraid to say anything and went on to his house with her husband. But at midnight when she thought her husband was asleep she took a knife and went secretly down to the river and began to cut open the belly of the corpse. But her husband saw her go out and followed her. What he saw filled him with terror, for he said to himself, 'My wife must be a Churelin'. He took the girl back to the house before she was able to remove the child and in the morning said that he must take her back to her home for she was too dangerous a wife for him to keep. As they were going back they came near an ant-hill and once more the girl overheard the conversation of the crows in the tree above her. 'There is a great treasure', they said, 'in this ant-hill. If anyone were to dig it up he would be rich. But this poor girl could not get the child that would bring her luck, for they said she was a Churelin; and now if she tries to get this fortune, they will surely say she is a Rakshasin.' And so it was, for though the girl heard of the treasure so near her, she did not dare tell her husband anything about it.

*Tarina ke nāni nāna wo daiya  
 Tarina ke nāni nāna wo daiya  
 Janamina lethai, what is the story  
 Of Maru of the grizzled beard?*

Where is our plane, where is our chisel  
 O God, where is the plough?

In the house, Maru, is the plane and chisel  
 In the forest is the plough.

Mother, quickly prepare my pej  
For I must go to cut the plough  
Maru of the grizzled beard.  
Is already drinking his pej.

Mother, quickly give me my plane and chisel  
For I must go to the sweet forest  
Maru is already going  
With plane and chisel to the sweet forest.

Mother, he has started  
Maru of the grizzled beard.

Mother, he has reached the forest  
He is looking for a sandal tree  
Maru of the grizzled beard.

Mother, he is cutting down the sandal tree  
Maru of the grizzled beard.

Mother, he is cutting the trunk at the bottom  
Mother, he is cutting the trunk at the top  
Maru of the grizzled beard.

Mother, he has taken the wood on his shoulder  
Maru of the grizzled beard.

Mother, he is reaching his house again  
Maru of the grizzled beard.

### A POTTER'S SONG

487

O THE Kumbhar's hand  
And the Kumbharin's back  
They do it *ghamāgham*  
Down below the kiln.

### A ROADMENDERS' SONG

488

DIGGING out the stones  
Breaking up the pebbles  
We'll spread the stones across the road  
And so we'll save our lives.

### A CHAMAR'S SONG

489

BUY my fine sandal  
Will any hear or no?  
In the middle of the river  
A buffalo has died  
The Chamar took its hide and flesh  
Bhagavan took its soul.

## LAMANA SONGS

490

LAMANA :

When I am away  
Eat red maize one day  
And white maize the next.

HIS WIFE :

O Naik, you pushed me over the threshold  
And at once you go away to earn  
In July you made rope of hemp  
In August you coloured it  
For the red bullocks you made a mat  
Decorated with red stripes  
O Naik, you brought me to your house  
As your bride to live with you  
And at once you go away to trade  
You are going away and I will be alone  
And who will content me?

LAMANA :

My Naikin, there is my little brother  
He will content you  
My little brother will tether your mind to me  
When I go away  
Sow a tulsi plant in the midst of the court  
Look at it and remember me  
If the tulsi droops  
Know your lord is in danger  
But if it burns with colour  
Know he is happy  
And earning money for you.

The Lamana gypsies who spend a large part of the year going from place to place with their laden pack-bullocks often have to leave their wives behind to look after their fields and homes. In this song a newly married wife, who has just been 'pushed over the threshold' complains at being

left alone. The tulsi that reveals by its condition the lot of the absent master of the house commonly occurs in the folk-tales.

Compare a similar sense of frustration in a Chaumasa song recorded by W. G. Archer in Bihar.<sup>1</sup>

Pleasant is November. The fair lady  
 Sees the paddy all round  
 And writes to her lord  
 My husband left me  
 And went to another land  
 And he does not care for me any more  
 I was only twelve years old  
 When he had my marriage finished  
 And brought me here  
 Now in my full bloom  
 When I am like a pomegranate  
 My husband is a cloud in another land  
 Now when the lemons and oranges are ready  
 My husband forgets me  
 The garden is blossoming, O my heartless darling  
 And in it the bee hovers  
 Cannot your heart see  
 That the garden withers for want of you?

## 491

WHAT are the bullocks made of?  
 And what is the cloth on their backs?  
 The bullocks are of gold  
 The cloth is of silver  
 Come bullocks come  
 To the camping-ground.

<sup>1</sup> W. G. Archer, 'Seasonal Songs of Patna District', *Man in India*, XXII, 237.

## AGARIA SONGS

THE Agaria are the primitive iron-smelters and blacksmiths of the Maikal Hills.

492

WHERE did Agarsai build his lake?  
Where did he use his spade?  
At Dhaikhan he built his lake  
By the hill he used his spade  
When the lake was ready  
He planted lime-trees round it  
The parrots nested there  
Agarsai took his red gulel and went to save the fruit  
He went to one tree, he went to another,  
But he could find no parrot  
But when he came to the third tree  
He heard a parrot talking  
He slung a pebble from his sling  
There was thunder in the sky  
He slung a second pebble  
And it hit the lime-tree's branch  
The third pebble struck the parrot  
And it fell with a thud  
That shook the throne of Rama  
'O Agarsai, why did you kill the learned parrot?'  
Said Rama and gave it back its life.

493

THE twelve brothers are blowing their bellows  
The fiery iron never cools  
Some of the birds sit smiling  
Some of the birds are sweetly singing  
Some sit before him with neatly parted hair  
O the fiery iron never cools.

This Agaria Karma is interpreted as a description of the first twelve Agaria brothers with their twelve wives who are represented by the birds sitting before the forge.

## 494

*Hai re hai!* I have seen the Agaria smithy  
What wood do they use for the bellows?  
What skin is stretched upon them?  
What are the feed-poles made of?  
Who blows the bellows? I will go and see  
The bellows are made of khamar wood  
The skin is made of cow-hide  
The feed-poles are of bamboo  
The Agaria girl blows the bellows.

## 495

BLACKSMITH, by striking flint on steel  
You make fire and burn the open clearing  
The grasshopper jumped out and escaped  
The butterfly flew away  
But in that jungle the ant was doomed to death  
In the middle of the path it died  
And a Chamar came to skin it  
With half the skin he made some creaking shoes  
With half he made a drum.

## WEAVING SONGS

### SUNG BY THE PANKA AND GANDA WEAVERS

496

WHO will stretch the warp, brother  
Who will stretch the warp?  
It is raining *jhirmi* *jhirmi*  
Moss is growing in the yard  
Panka asks his Pankin  
Where shall we fix the frame?  
Who will stretch the warp, brother  
Who will stretch the warp?  
Who will weave the cloth, brother?  
Who will use the old yarn, brother?  
In the bazaar you will measure sixteen cubits  
Yet we will always be poor  
Who will stretch the warp, brother  
Who will stretch the warp?

497

ON the river bank is a tall semur tree, parrot  
Its cotton flies into the sky  
The boys of this village are great rascals, parrot  
They go to bring down the cotton with their sticks  
The girls of this village are great rascals, parrot  
They go with their baskets to pick it up  
They gather it and when they're ready, parrot  
They take it to the carder  
They card it, and when it's ready, parrot  
They take it to the dyer  
They dye it and when it's ready, parrot  
They take it to the Panka  
O Panka, make other people's cloth as you like  
But make mine carefully, pull the frame firmly  
O Panka, make pictures of my friends along the border  
And on the body of the cloth  
Patterns of my loved madman.

## SONGS OF BAMBOO WORK

THE Dhulia are the semi-aboriginal basket-makers of the Maikal Hills; they also make winnowing-fans and beat drums and dance at Gond and Pardhan marriages.

498

WHERE were you born, Dhulia  
And where did you take human form ?  
In the Kajliban I was born  
In the house of a carpenter I took human form  
As a carpenter you took your axe  
But instead of wood you cut bamboo  
Like a tree you cut it taking the middle part  
Cutting off the top and bottom  
Splitting the bamboo into slats  
Still making finer slats  
Then you made a winnowing-fan  
You made a little winnowing-fan  
And you took them to the Mother Goddess.

499

I SAID to the Dhulia  
O brother Dhulia  
Make me four *mora* baskets  
He says, Let's go to fish  
Make four *mora* baskets for me  
O brother Dhulia make me a winnowing-fan  
Make me a *chitti*, O brother Dhulia  
Make me a *dauri* with strong double walls.

The *mora* is a shallow open basket used for baling out water from a stream which has been dammed for fishing. The *chitti* is a bamboo lid placed on top of earthen cooking pots. The *dauri* is a circular basket of fine construction with an inner lining which explains the reference in the song to its double walls.

## FISHING SONGS

THE Dhimar are the fishermen of the upper reaches of the Narbada River. They are considered a 'pure' caste and are employed as household servants and water-carriers even by Brahmins. The women earn a little by parching rice and gram and selling it in the bazaars.

500

THE Dhimar and Dhimrin are going to the bazaar  
Down falls the Dhimrin flop on her backside  
The Dhimar picks her up with his mouth  
Dhimrin, you are going glittering to the bazaar  
She goes into the middle of the big bazaar  
She spreads out her fish and sits down to sell them  
How much are those katiya fish?  
Katiya fish are very costly, brother  
Who would buy your katiya fish,  
Who would care to eat them?  
The Dhimar and Dhimrin are going to the bazaar.

Katiya fish are used as an aphrodisiac and as a cure for impotence, a fact which gives point to the reference here.

501

PARCH, parch the gram, O mother Dhimrin  
A lidful of gram, a lampful of dhuru  
May my gram parch well  
And may the ashes fly into the sinner's eyes  
May the dust be sifted out  
May the parching gram  
Parch well, O mother Dhimrin.

Dhuru is the grain that does not parch when the Dhimrin puts her pan on the fire.

## 502

AT night they catch the fish  
 By day they mend the net  
 My Dhimar husband is preparing the net  
 He catches basketsful of fish  
 And lidsful of prawns  
 He throws the net in the Goat Pool  
 A crocodile catches him  
 And carries him away  
 What has happened to my Dhimar husband?  
 I try to console her breast  
 But she takes no heed.

## 503

*QUEEN FISH, Queen Fish*  
 Your marriage day has come  
 Pour all the water into the pots.  
*Queen Fish, Queen Fish*  
 Come out for your marriage  
 All the water is in the pots  
*Queen Fish, Queen Fish*  
 The wedding party's come  
 They are camping on the bank  
*Queen Fish, Queen Fish*  
 Hide yourself quickly  
 Pour all the water into the pots.

A song used by women when they go to bale water out of a pond in order to strand the fish which are then easily caught.

## A SONG ABOUT A LIQUOR SHOP

504

*Jhim Jhim* falls the flowers  
From the mahua on the hill  
Into the still they put the flowers  
The Kalarin sits on a golden stool  
And pours water into the still  
Give me a cup for love, Kalarin  
And when drunk I'll wander through the village.

O Jogi for money you may drink a love-cup.

In the village I have no house  
In the forest I have no field.

Many a Jogi I have seen like that  
They all run away from my house.

Kalarin, don't you know my name ?  
I am the disciple of Bhairon  
I will turn your still to stone  
And your liquor to water.



SONGS OF THE COWHERDS



## SONGS OF THE COWHERDS

THE special songs of the Ahir or Rawat cowherds are the Basgit and the Doha.

The Basgit are sung by the Ahir to the flute while they are grazing the cattle in field or forest. They are also used at weddings, as the marriage procession goes along, and sometimes on such familiar and homely occasions as the coming of a stranger or the visit of a relative to the house.

The Doha (which are sung also by the Gond) are generally used at the Diwali and Marhai festivals. These are very short songs which can best be described as couplets, for they often rhyme. They begin with a loud shout of *Hare hare bhai re*, and end with a sort of combined yell and whistle, *Re uie*.

At Diwali the Ahir go singing from house to house at night and wake the cattle by beating them with memri sticks and shouting, 'O the linseed! O the cow-dung scraps! O the dust of the cow-dung! Awake, awake, my lucky cow. Today Amawas is fulfilled.' In the wealthier houses the Ahir are then given a goat, a pig or a fowl which they sacrifice on the spot. They throw the head among the cattle, afterwards burying it in or before the cattle-shed. At any time during the celebration the cowherds shout their Doha.

The Marhai Festival is primarily a commercial affair. It represents the commercial transformation of the ancient Pen Karsita or Games of the Gods, which the Gond formerly celebrated. Even now in Bastar the Muria and Maria bring their gods to the Marhai bazaars and the procession of gods, accompanied by hundreds of dancing and wildly gesticulating mediums is a most impressive sight. In Mandla, however, where the aborigines no longer make any gods that can be carried about, the conduct of affairs has passed into the hands of the Ahir. These come dressed in cowrie jackets and adorned with peacock feathers and bearing immensely long bamboo poles hung with strings of sweets and coloured streamers to represent Matia, the mischievous sprite who, if not honoured in this way, would turn the milk sour and steal the pej. The Ahir process round the bazaar carrying these poles and shouting their Doha. Some of them engage in mock combat with decorated sticks. They go from booth

to booth and from house to house, dancing, singing and begging for parched gram or copper coins.

The following will give some idea of the form of the originals :

*Hare hare bhai re  
Bājat āwe bāsuri rē bhaiya  
Udat āwe dhur ho  
Uthi le āwe nāch kanhaiya  
Khochai kamal ke phul rē uie.*

There is the music of a flute  
The dust rises  
From there the dancing maidens come  
Lotus flowers are in their hair.

## DOHA

506

BROTHER, I was fencing the garden  
And ran my foot on a stump  
I married a girl for a couple of days  
She looked quite pretty—out in the road.

507

I WENT to market and bought a cart  
I went to market and got a wife  
A cubit and a half tall  
And nothing but bones.

508

*Are re re* the cow-dung scraps  
The dust from the fire-pot  
Wake up, wake up, my pretty cow  
Today is the night of Amavas.

509

LOVE-DRUNKEN girl  
You take no heed  
When the blow falls  
You will repent.

510

*Hare re re* all the poles  
Are painted *ringi chingi*  
I bought a girl for five cowries  
And a rat has carried her off.

511

I WENT to graze the herd of cows  
A dried dung-cake under my arm  
At midnight the cows escaped  
And I had to leave my young parrot.

512

THIS side, that side flows the river  
 A stack of kodon stands between  
 Everyone else's wife is good  
 But mine's a wandering goat.

*Harahi*, the epithet here applied to the wife, is usually used of a cow or she-goat that will not stay in the shed, but is always wandering abroad.

513

THIS side, that side flows the river  
 A dry tree stands between  
 When the golden bird lays her eggs  
 She suffers much pain.

514

*Hare hare* the pigeon drinks  
 Water from the little stream  
 That is how the Panka girls  
 Kiss in this village.

515

THE grass springs up  
 Reeds are growing  
 You can have a gentleman for two days  
 Then Gond after Gond for the rest of your life.

A warning against love-affairs with outsiders. A romance with a Lala Babu, a smart gentleman, can only last a few days, and then the monotony of Gond after Gond becomes intensified.

516

INSIDE the smell of memri  
 Outside the lowing of the cows  
 Loose my calf, Kanthi  
 And daily milk the cows.

Memri is a shrub which the Ahirs tie to their sticks when they are grazing the cattle.

517

I CRY, Master, Master  
 Your Master's gone away  
 Write a letter and I'll send it  
 Or the parrot will take a message.

518

*Jhirmi t jhirmi t* falls the rain  
 The court is slippery with mud.  
 The Ganda asks his wife  
 Where shall I put the sizing-brush?

519

I WENT to the bazaar  
 And bought a bit of iron  
 My dance's drum is broken  
 How am I to sing my Doha?

520

I WENT to the bazaar  
 And bought parched rice  
 My drummer's eyes are broken  
 Devi Dai has taken them.

521

I WENT to the bazaar  
 For a sliver of cotton  
 Exploring my bed  
 I discovered a girl.

522

THE she-goat caste is feckless  
 Takes no heed of shouts or orders  
 From the herd the panther catches  
 And eats them one by one.

523

*Ghughur ghaghār* goes the grindstone  
 Flour is scattered round the hole  
 My love has had a baby  
 And the drum sounds.

524

MASTER, we are not begging Jogi  
 We do not live on other people's food  
 Master, we are Nand Kanhaiya  
 And we've come to give you our darshan.

When the Ahir come to dance they are not always very welcome and the Gond shut their doors against them. In this song the Ahir claim that they have not come to ask, but to bestow, a favour—they are the living representatives of Krishna or Nand Kanhaiya, the divine cowherd.

525

*Hare hare bhai re*  
 The Rawat's stick, the Rawatin's back  
 On a Saturday  
 The music sounds *damādam*.

526

My foot slips as I dance  
 My anklets are full of dust  
 Let us go soon  
 For we have far to go.

grv 527

ROUND the field  
 We graze the cows  
 In the bed of the stream  
 We graze the she-buffaloes.

528

WHEN a village is deserted  
 The fresh grass grows up above it  
 The deer from the forest feed there  
 And the Ahir's cows.

529

GIVE the dancers something, mother  
 Our anklets are thick with dust  
 Our hands and feet will move no more  
 But we still can jerk our hips.

O THE moss in the river  
Let us all dance together  
As if we were children of one mother.

## SONGS FOR THE FLUTE

531

SLOWLY flows the stream  
The golden girl is catching fish  
Both her young breasts  
Are smeared with mud  
When those are seen, who would gaze  
Even at her decorated hair?

532

DON'T eat raw figs  
Or you'll get a pain  
Don't marry a dark girl  
Or you'll always quarrel.

533

I SAW them kill the deer  
I saw them cut it up  
I heard fish from the river  
For we in the sun  
But all she's serving me  
Is a dry curry of channa leaves.

534

How lovely is the throat  
Of the player on the flute  
How beautiful the ears  
Of those who listen  
May the singers and players live for ever  
And their children dwell on Kailas.

535

THE chickens are caught *ranban ranban*  
And eaten by the cat  
We are chicks of warrior breed  
How long must we remain in hiding?

536

ON the bare branch  
A fig has ripened  
The parrot glances at it sideways  
The Gond girls of this village  
Would give their lives for me.

537

Do not hurt us, Basdeo  
While we cut the green bamboo  
Let not the axe cut us  
Let not the handle knock us  
The blade is of gold  
The handle is of silver  
We lovers are cutting the green bamboo.

## THE BALLAD OF KANTHI AND HIS SISTER

THIS song is sung by the Ahir boys to the accompaniment of a flute while they are out in the fields or forest grazing the village cattle. Its theme, the sacrifice of a sister by her brother in a lake, is common in India and has been studied in Chapter XVII of *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*.

538

'WE two, brother and sister, Kanthi, from childhood have been orphans;

We have no parents, Kanthi, we two are alone.

The black ant-hill is our mother, the clump of bamboos our father'.

For twelve years the dun buffaloes have been shut in their shed.

'Let us go, maiden, and we will feed you with milk and curds'.

'Don't let us go and curds, buffaloes, work for us instead'. For we

'The days are passing, maiden, let us go, we die of hunger, Twelve years have passed, maiden, we are dying of thirst and hunger'.

But the maiden could not look straight with her eyes at the buffaloes.

'Play where you will, Kanthi, but don't go near the buffaloes'. One day, as he played Kanthi approached the buffaloes' shed.

When they saw the boy the buffaloes called to him,

'Kanthi, your parents died twelve years ago.

Twelve years have passed and we are still shut in our shed.

We get no food or water, Kanthi, for pity let us out.'

Hearing this, in pity Kanthi released the buffaloes:

*Ranban ranban* the buffaloes scattered through the forest.

The maiden saw the buffaloes. 'Often I told you not to,

But you took no notice. Now you have released them'.

Every day Kanthi took the buffaloes to graze.

As they grazed they joined their horns to one another.  
Kanthi fed the buffaloes and brought them home to shut them in their shed.

With a gold tethering-rope he tied their feet,  
He milked them in a golden pot.  
The maiden cooked the milk and made it into curds.  
She took the buttermilk to sell from house to house.

'In which jungle, Kanthi, do you graze the buffaloes ?  
In which stream do you make them drink ?  
O Kanthi, feed them on the wooded hill  
O Kanthi, take them to the lake to drink'.

But the boy took the buffaloes to Kajli Kachhar  
He took them to the deep pool of Koeli to drink.  
The buffaloes drank and went into the pool;  
They stayed in the water seven days and seven nights.  
'I will give you coconuts,' said Ka<sup>ñ</sup>thi. 'I will give a goat'.  
But the buffaloes went still deeper into the pool of Koeli.  
'Only if you give your sister will we come out of the pool'.

When the boy promised, they came out and returned home.  
'I warned you and you took no notice, brother.  
Where did you take the buffaloes to drink ?  
Wash your feet, brother, eat your food.  
Seven days and nights have passed, but no food has gone into your mouth'.

Kanthi thought in mind and heart :  
'O Ram, we are brother and sister, born of one mother, how can I offer her ?'  
'I won't wash my feet, sister, I won't eat, my head is aching  
I am going to work, sister, bring me my food'.  
The maiden thought in mind and heart, 'Why doesn't my brother eat his food ?'

At cock-crow Kanthi released the buffaloes.  
Scattered through the forest they reached Kajli Kachhar.  
Letting the buffaloes go as they would the boy lay down and slept.  
For twelve months he slept.  
As Kanthi slept the buffaloes wallowed in the deep pool of Koeli.

The maiden prepared dry bread, she made bread with oil;  
 She cooked rice and pulse and put it in a basket.  
 She put on all her ornaments and locked the house and  
 went.

She thought in her mind, 'So long as I live, brother,  
 I will work and care for you. Yet when I warned you, you  
 took no heed'.

The maiden sought her brother in the four quarters  
 But she could not find him, Kanthi was in Kajli Kachhar  
 At last she went to Kajli Kachhar and there she found him  
 sleeping.

She went down to the pool and saw the buffaloes and  
 pondered in her mind.

'Wake, wake, Kanthi, eat your food. You've been hungry  
 seven days and nights'.

When Kanthi heard his sister's word, he got up.  
 When Kanthi saw his sister, he wept in his mind.

'Sister, my sister, bring me a pot of clear water, for I am  
 thirsty'.

The maiden took her pot and went to the deep pool of  
 Koeli.

'Kanthi my brother, I'll bring you water from here'.  
 'No, it is dirty ~~there~~, bring it from further in'.

The maiden goes up to her knees and calls,  
 'O Kanthi, shall I bring the water from here?'  
 'The water there, sister, is full of rubbish, go a little further'.

The maiden goes up to her waist and calls,  
 'O Kanthi, shall I bring the water from here?'  
 'The water there, sister, has a green scum, go a little further'.

The maiden goes up to her breasts and calls,  
 'O Kanthi, shall I bring the water from here?'  
 'The water there, sister, is still dirty, go a little further'.

Slowly slowly the maiden goes up to her head,  
 But she finds no clear water.

As she goes under the water, she throws out a pot of clear  
 water.

It falls in front of Kanthi, thus he sacrifices his sister to  
 the water.

As she goes below the water, the buffaloes come out and  
 turn to home.

Kanthi got up, her brother, and threw the food she brought him

Into the deep pool of Koeli,  
And weeping followed the buffaloes home.  
'There were just two of us, brother and sister, but today I  
am all alone'.



## **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SONGS**



## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SONGS

**A**n increasing number of Karma songs deal with social and political subjects. The aborigines of the Maikal Hills have never broken into rebellion like the Santal, Munda and Maria, but their politics are nevertheless strongly felt. They deeply resent the loss of the freedom of the forest, the taxation on land and cattle which rightly or wrongly they consider far too onerous, the oppressive policy of landlords and money-lenders, the failure of Government to protect them against this oppression, the intolerable conduct of subordinates. Those who live in the Indian States complain even more bitterly of the hard and burdensome life that is forced upon them.

In China, says Arthur Waley, folk-songs were collected for political purposes. They were regarded as a means by which the governing classes could get into touch with the common people and discover their grievances and aspirations.<sup>1</sup> It would be well if the Government of the Central Provinces and the Rulers of Indian States were to adopt a similar policy.

The first famine in the Mandla District of which any real information can be obtained occurred in 1818, the year in which the District was formally handed over to the British. Since then there have been many famines. In 1833 the price of grain, which a few years previously had been sold in Raipur at the rate of 400 seers to the rupee, rose to 8 seers a rupee. In 1868 the aboriginal tribes did not greatly suffer, but in 1896-97, in 1900, in 1908 and in 1921 there were serious disasters, though in recent years the district has been happily free of actual starvation. From time to time there has been an acute shortage and relief works have been opened, but the sufferings have not been to the degree experienced in previous years. *The Mandla District Gazetteer* gives an account of the distress in the aboriginal villages in 1896-97.

In February 1897 the authorities began to realize that, though relief works and poor houses were in

<sup>1</sup> A. Waley, *The Temple* (New York, 1923). W. G. Archer tells us that Arthur Waley has since informed him that this is not quite correct. Songs were 'sampled' rather than collected—like taking omens. According as a particular song was being sung, the state of public feeling could be assessed.

full swing, the distress was still acute in aboriginal villages, and as yet showed no signs of abatement. The reason was that the Gonds and Baigas, always suspicious of strangers *et dona ferentes*, took refuge in the forests at the approach of a relieving officer and refused to be tempted to the relief works, preferring to wring a scantily livelihood from the jungle than be forced to work at an uncongenial task in a remote and unknown region. Even if a few of them did overcome their scruples and find their way to a work centre, it is recorded that 'at the least breath of censure from an overseer or the least fall in the scale of wages, their powers of endurance would shrivel up, and they would return to their native haunts and habits.' It appeared as though their knowledge of the resources of the jungle rendered them independent of outside help, and the authorities were hopelessly deceived. As soon, however, as the monsoon broke, the relieving officers recognized the vital necessity of a system of 'village relief'. For by this time the forest had ceased to yield its fruits, and the forest tribes were compelled to satisfy their cravings with roots, damp leaves and toadstools. This unwholesome diet coupled with the diseases it engendered rendered them physically incapable of making the long journey to a relief centre, even if they had been willing to venture on it, and it was clear that unless help was actually brought to their doors, they would simply die of starvation in the villages. Tardily enough therefore beneath the full fury of an Indian monsoon, in a district possessed of no roads, no bridges, and no transport, the authorities decided to develop the system of village relief. All the forces of nature, says an eye witness,—swollen torrents, trackless mountains, impracticable jungles, and disease, which laid low alike the sufferer and the bringer of relief,—all were arrayed on the side of famine. Somehow or other the relieving officers forced their food supplies through deep jungles and flooded rivers, and penetrated into the inmost recesses of the hills, where their assistance was most urgently required. People ceased to die of starvation, but not to suffer from privation and want.

The villagers still have vivid memories of their sufferings in the early famines. Seed was hidden inside dung-cakes for fear of theft. People would steal the grain sown in the

fields and eat it. They made pej out of the dung of hares and bread of semhar flowers and wild figs. Other articles of diet were basinda seeds (which tasted like wheat), gurlu seeds (which gave a burning urine), birhul fruit and sarai seeds which often gave the children acute pain. A lump of salt was kept and at meals each member of the family would lick it in turn. The Baiga still remember with relish the story of the Brahmin Forest Guard who visited a Baiga village and demanded food according to the usual custom. The Baiga gave him what they had and when he insisted on being provided with salt, handed him the family lump, which he ground up and put into his cooking-pot. It was only after he had eaten it that the Baiga told him the use to which the lump of salt had previously been put.

Old men and women still vividly remember how children fell down and died by the side of their houses. 'We wept when our pots broke, but not when our relations died.' 'The jackals played with our skulls as if they were marbles.'

The famine songs probably came into being as songs used by the people engaged on Government Relief Works, though in some cases they may have originated on the ceremonial Karma expeditions which were intended to repair a bad harvest or the failure of the rains.

## FAMINE

539

THIS is a year of famine  
We are all dying of hunger  
Where shall we get our kodon-pej?  
Where shall we get sikia-pej?  
Take a leaf-cup of pej and be content with that  
Find a root here or there; you must be content with that  
We can't get badhi: we can't get bijahi  
Let us go slowly, with our empty sikka swinging.

540

THERE is a halo round the moon  
The sun is in eclipse  
My debts surround my life  
And nothing can save me  
No one will give us badhi  
No one will give us dedhi  
No one will lend us anything  
There is a halo round the moon  
The sun is in eclipse.

The connection here between debts and the eclipse is to be found in the widely distributed legend that the sun was in debt to a sweeper who impounded it when it failed to pay, thus causing an eclipse. *Badhi* is a system of giving grain on condition that one-and-a-half times the amount is returned after the harvest; *dedhi* is the system of repayment with interest agreed between lender and borrower.

541

RIVERS and streams are dry  
For the famine of water  
Under the stones  
The crabs are weeping *dhar dhar*.

CLOUDS covered the world's four corners  
Covered them darkly  
But not a cloud thundered  
There was not a whisper from a cloud  
Not a cloud shed a drop of rain  
Clouds covered the world's four corners  
Covered them darkly  
Clouds thundered, they covered the world  
But not a cloud shed a drop of rain  
Clouds covered the world  
Covered it darkly.

## CIVILIZATION

543

*Hai Re!* The train whistles, it is leaving Bilaspur  
In front is the train, behind is the signal  
The villagers leave their work and run to see it  
At every station the engine takes coal and water  
In front runs the wire to give the news  
Behind we sit clutching our tickets in our hands  
In front goes the motor  
Behind goes the cycle  
Leaving their food, the children run to see.

544

O ho the babu blows his whistle  
The train is going to Bilaspur  
In front goes the engine  
The peasant goes behind  
The babu keeps on whistling  
The train is going away.

545

THE train comes puffing into the jungle  
In one car rides the King  
In another rides the Queen  
In the third is the sahib with shining spectacles  
The train comes puff-puff-puff  
The sahib with shining spectacles  
Gives presents to the Baiga.

546

BE careful where you go  
For the English are kings  
Who has ever seen the boundary of their kingdom ?  
They have taken all the best hills  
In the sweet forest they have built their bungalows  
They have big guns  
When the tiger and tigress see them  
They run away for fear.

547

THE ever-touring Englishmen have built their bungalows  
All over our sweet forest  
They drive their trains with smoke  
O look at them, how they talk on wires to one another  
With their wires they have bound the whole world together  
for themselves.

548

O ENGLISHMAN, marvellous is your brain that makes the  
engine run  
With iron nails and iron plugs and coal you make it run  
With fire and water you created smoke; by your brain you  
make it run.

## GOVERNMENT

549

IN this kingdom of the English how hard it is to live  
To pay the cattle-tax we have to sell a cow  
To pay the forest-tax we have to sell a bullock  
To pay the land-tax we have to sell a buffalo  
How are we to get our food?  
In this kingdom of the English how hard it is to live  
In the village sits the Landlord  
In the gate sits the Kotwar  
In the garden sits the Patwari  
In the field sits the Government  
In this kingdom of the English how hard it is to live.

550

O THE deep sorrow  
In this Raja's kingdom  
There is hard pain here  
I made a horse of a tiger  
I put a scorpion for its bridle  
I used a snake for my whip  
What hard suffering  
Is in this Raja's kingdom.

551

THE money of a poor man  
Is portioned out to twelve  
For the cattle there is the chari-tax  
And nishtar for the jungle  
Government makes no difference  
Between the rich and poor  
In the village the Mukkadam robs us  
At the threshing-floor the Kotwar  
At the plough the Patwari robs us  
Till at last everything is taken.

## POLITICAL HISTORY

552

WHY were the Gond created?  
The first Gond Rajas made forts of gold  
They drank, they drank  
With their right hands  
With their left hands they pulled down the forts  
Next morning they found their kingdoms  
    were forgotten.  
Today they drink, they drink  
With both their hands  
And become kings again.

. 553

LIQUOR, you turn us into kings  
What matter if the world ignores us?  
The Brahmin lives by his books  
The Panka boys run off with Panka girls  
The Dhulia is happy with his basket  
The Ahir with his cows  
But one bottle makes a Gond a Governor  
What matter if the Congress ignores us?



## **FESTIVAL SONGS**



## RELIGIOUS SONGS

**A**UTHENTIC religious folk-songs are not very common and they have a habit of turning into love-songs in their concluding lines. Rama, Lakshman and Sita are described as members of an earthly family, and it is not always possible to decide whether a name denotes a legendary or an actual lover. The following songs will give some idea of the way the old mythology is used.

554

WITHOUT Rama there is no end to sorrow  
Without Rama how lonely is Ayodhya  
Without Lakshman there is no wisdom  
Without a husband how lonely is the bed  
This sorrow none can bear  
O sorrow, sorrow  
Leg says, I'll be a pilgrim  
Hand says, I'll give alms to everyone  
Eyes say, We'll visit the whole world  
Who will care for me  
In sorrow, sorrow?

555

O VIRGIN Narbada  
How great is your renown  
Your palace is of stone  
Its door is made of earth  
The spire is of gold  
There is a great festival for you  
O virgin Narbada

The sacred source of the Narbada River (which is regarded as both Mother and Virgin) is the scene of a great festival every year at Sivaratri.

556

RADHA is dancing  
 And Mohan plays the flute  
 As she hears his music Radha dances  
 From the earth my bread arose  
 And a crow carried it away  
 Go and ask the Pandit  
 Where is the crow eating it?  
 Beyond the nine islands  
 And the eighty-four hundred thousand villages  
 Where even Mohan's music  
 Like an arrow cannot reach it  
 There the crow sits and eats my bread  
 While Radha dances  
 And Mohan plays the flute.

557

O BROTHER, think of God  
 In the dawn remember him  
 The moon has a little light  
 But the sun burns like fire  
 Girl, your love-charm is strong  
 The three worlds adore you  
 In the dawn remember him  
 The bubbling of the water  
 The blowing of the breeze  
 So is the body's ecstasy  
 As I lie on my bed  
 Tears fall from my eyes  
 Put no trust in the body  
 In the dawn remember God.

558

SITA goes to Lanka and brings a tainted name  
 Raja, what misery you suffered  
 With anxious heart you went for her  
 But you gained victory  
 And your name was written down.

559

THE darling virgin Lakshman  
 Was such a bearer of truth  
 That as he went along  
 He never picked a blade of grass  
 He never drank the water  
 From a lake whose banks were broken  
 He never looked  
 At the face of a stranger's wife.

560

EARLY in the morning rose the sun  
 And Mother Kausilya with the bundle of sin and virtue tied  
 together, cried  
 I must go I must go to Vaikunth with this bundle on my back  
 I do not know the road, I'll have to ask the way  
 But with the bundle of sin and virtue I must go to Vaikunth.

This notion of man's life as *pāp-dharma*, a mixture of good and evil, of vice and virtue, is common among the aborigines.

## BAMBHOLIYA

BAMBHOLIYA are sung by Gond pilgrims on their way to Amarkantak, the sacred source of the River Narbada, usually called Mai—the Mother—by the villagers who live along its banks.

561

In my father-in-law's house a boy is born  
In my mother's house the drums are beating.

562

THE dust blows along the road  
Over the Narbada the red dust blows.

563

Go to bathe in Kasi stream  
And your life's sin will be done away.

'Kasi stream' is the Narbada, which is sometimes compared to the Ganges, though held even more holy by the people of the neighbourhood. Indeed it is said that the Ganges must come once a year in the shape of a black cow and bathe in the waters of Narbada, after which she can return home—white.

564

I HAVE two bottles of attar  
One for the evening, and one for the morning.

565

THE house is built high and its door faces east  
In the house the drums are sounding for Sita's marriage.

## JAWARA SONGS

THE Jawara ceremony (also known as the Phulwari or Jag) is a picturesque festival of the countryside, which has probably been borrowed by the aborigines from their Hindu neighbours. Celebrated in April, it resembles in many ways the Karma festival of Chota Nagpur though its aim appears to be not so much the promotion of the fertility of the crops as the removal of private ills from individual homes.

The Jawara is celebrated every three years. The Panda or village priest prepares a corner of his own house as a sort of shrine. The essence of the festival is the sowing of seed in little baskets in honour of Mata Kalsahin—it will be remembered that the kalsa is the sacred decorated pot which fulfils so many functions at a marriage. First the Panda himself and then anyone in the neighbourhood who suffers from illness, the attacks of witch or ghost or any other misfortune, prepares a small basket with well-manured earth which is ceremonially dug up as at a marriage with a rice-pounder. Then in seven layers seven kinds of seed are sown—rice, wheat, ramtila, gram, kodon, maize and jawa. The baskets—there may be seventy or eighty of them—are brought to the Panda's house and piled up in the consecrated room. Little flags are tied to bamboo sticks and planted before them. Above the baskets are placed earthen pots full of water, the mouth of each pot being closed with a lamp which has a long wick which will burn for eight nights and nine days without going out. The whole room soon assumes a gay and animated appearance, especially when the shoots of grain begin to appear in the baskets. The coloured flags, the brightly burning lamps and the green vegetation make a charming sight.

For eight nights and nine days the Panda lives in front of the shrine. Every morning he waters the baskets and every day there are ceremonies of supplication and sacrifice. On the last day goats are offered and promises made to the gods. Then all the men and women of the village assemble. Many village priests are possessed by the gods and dance and rave in ecstasy. When all is over the people take out the baskets in which the shoots have now grown about a foot

in height and carry them down to the nearest stream. They immerse the baskets in the water and grab handfuls of the growing shoots and put some behind their neighbours' ears.

The Bhajli festival which is celebrated in August is a children's imitation of the Jawara. It is done in honour of the same goddess, but no Panda supervizes the ceremonies and the young girls of the village have the arrangements in their own hands. They too sow their little baskets with grain and when they are ready go round the village singing from house to house and beg sufficient for a feast. Then they take the baskets down to the stream and throw them in the water.

The Birhi is another ceremony of the same kind performed in other villages and in other areas. This takes place usually in January. Small pots are placed on bamboo stands, grain is sown in them and on the last day women beat the drums and the men dance. When they carry the pots down to the river, they carry the Panda with them and throw him too into the water.

These songs are sung during the ceremony of soaking the Jawara seed.

## 566

IN the month of Sawan  
 The rain pours down  
 In the month of Bhadon  
 All the rivers are deep  
 Today begins Kuar  
 When the Panda ties the skin on his drum  
 Today begins Kartik  
 When the Panda lights his lamp  
 Today begins Aghan and Pus  
 When frost covers the ground  
 Today begins Magh and Phagun  
 When coloured water flies about  
 Today begins Chait  
 When the Panda sows his linseed  
 Whose music fills the air  
 Whose drum beats *ghan ghan*  
 O the deep music of the kalsa  
 The deep music of the drum.

567

IN red Dhawaragiri sings the koel  
 On the branch of a mango tree  
 Where does the blue pigeon live?  
 Where does the peacock live in the Kajliban forest?  
 The blue pigeon lives in a yellow tree  
 The peacock has a nest in the Kajliban forest  
 The Baigin catches the blue pigeon  
 The Baiga catches the peacock in the Kajliban forest  
 What does the blue pigeon eat?  
 What does the peacock eat in the Kajliban forest?  
 On gold does the blue pigeon feed  
 On kutki the peacock feeds in the Kajliban forest  
 Who buys the blue pigeon?  
 Who buys the peacock in the Kajliban forest?  
 Kalsahin buys the blue pigeon  
 The monkey god buys the peacock in the Kajliban forest.

The Pardhan of Patangarh say that Dhawaragiri is a sacred place in Khairagarh State where there is a waterfall and two pools, one pool of sin and one of virtue. Barren women sometimes promise the god of Dhawaragiri that if he will open their wombs they will dedicate their first male child to him. When such a child is born, it is said, he is happy enough for the first twelve years of his life or until his marriage, but as he is about to go round the pole with his bride at the most critical moment of the marriage ceremony, the god comes upon him and he runs away like a madman and wanders about for three, seven or twelve years until he comes to Dhawaragiri. Such youths are called Karhula. They keep their bodies perpetually smeared with oil and haldi and carry everywhere in their hands the cocoanut and betel-cutter that they were carrying round the pole at their marriage. When at last they reach Dhawaragiri they must climb up the waterfall to the top. If the god is angry he throws them down into the pool of sin but if he is favourable he takes them safely to the top and after this they are able to resume ordinary life and return to their wives and families. Such cases have occurred within memory of the Patangarh people. There are, of course, also a number of devotees of Dhawaragiri who remain as sadhus for the

whole of their lives, their devotion centring round this particular place.

This is the Jhulani Jawara Song used at any time during the proceedings when the magicians swing themselves:

## 568

Go anywhere, my darling son  
 But do not go to Kauru City  
 For the magic there is terrible  
 They will hit you with their fists  
 And turn you into a goat  
 Then once you are a goat  
 Only God can save you.

They will sacrifice you to the shrine  
 They will hit you with their fists  
 And turn you into a pig  
 Then once you are a pig  
 Only God can save you.

They will make you eat the village dirt  
 They will hit you with their fists  
 And turn you into a hen  
 Then once you are a hen  
 Only God can save you.

They will offer you in sacrifice  
 They will hit you with their fists  
 And turn you into a bullock  
 Then once you are a bullock  
 Only God can save you.

They will tie you to the plough  
 They will hit you with their fists  
 And turn you into a fly  
 Then once you are a fly  
 Only God can save you  
 They will make you sit on the wall  
 So darling son, go anywhere  
 But not to Kauru City.

The little Jawara shrine is officially in charge of some old woman who is called the Malin, or gardener. She has to keep the place clean. When the time comes for taking out

the gods, she shuts the door and refuses to open it until she receives a present, whereon the following song is sung :

569

THE Malin goes at cockcrow, but the bees go at midnight.  
 She puts flowers in her basket and covers them with cloth.  
 For whom is this fine platform, for whom this lovely garland ?  
 For the Monkey is the platform, for the old Mother this nine-lakh-garland.  
 The flowers are ready, all are ready to go to the Mother's house  
 When my darling Malin sees it and slams the door.  
 When the little monkey hears he cries, Who has slammed the door ?  
 The Monkey says, I will tell the Mother.

O Monkey, this Malin has brought me  
*A garland of nine lakhs of flowers;*  
 But why has she brought me flowers deflowered ?  
 Let her go home with her garland of flowers.  
 But the Malin stands with folded hands and cries  
 Where can I find a virgin flower ?

There is nothing in the world that is not deflowered  
 The water is deflowered by fish  
 The calves defile their mother's milk  
 The bees outrage every blossom.  
 Where can I find a virgin flower ?

These songs are sung during the procession, when the baskets of sprouting grain are taken to the river :

570

WITH a basket on your head  
 With a spade in your hand  
 Whither away my mother ?  
 With a basket on my head  
 With a spade in my hand  
 I am going to fetch manure  
 How many thousands of litters and palanquins  
 How many thousands of carriers  
 Have gathered to go my mother ?  
 Red, very red, is the roof of the litter

Burning white is your flag, mother  
Whose is the red, red litter, mother  
For whom is this great array?  
The red, red litter is for Satebaran  
For Kalsahin is the great array.

571

Be our help on the field of battle  
For the Moghul army is coming  
The daughter, the queen of the world says  
Listen, my little brother  
Send for Indra's horse and arm it  
And I will come with Sarada on my right hand  
And Hanuman on my left  
We will kill a hundred thousand Moghuls  
Two hundred thousand Moghul soldiers,  
Three hundred thousand Emperors  
Be our help on the field of battle  
For the Delhi Sultan has attacked us.

## BHAJLI SONGS

572

IN the river my tangana fish is quivering  
It will not let me draw water  
Let go let go, O tangana fish, my cloth  
For in my house my father-in-law is sick  
The fish says, Give your father-in-law a plane and chisel  
And he will cut wood all day long  
O tangana fish, let go let go my cloth  
For my mother-in-law is sick  
Give her a spinning-wheel and sliver  
And she will be busy all day long  
O tangana fish, let go let go my cloth  
For my dewar is sick  
Give him marbles and a spinning-top  
And he will be playing and dancing all day long  
O tangana fish, let go let go my cloth  
For my nanand is sick  
Give her a little basket and fan  
And with her games she will be raising the dust all day long.

573

THE Maharin girl is always teasing  
She climbs a lemon tree  
Who will gather up, she cries  
My waist-string nine hands long ?  
Who will pick up my long long hair ?  
Sister-in-law will gather up my waist-string  
Mother-in-law will gather up my hair  
Sister-in-law will dry the string on a pole  
Mother-in-law will carry on her shoulders  
My long long hair.

574

THE Brahmin girl is full of fun, Rohilla Ho !  
She climbs into the lime-tree  
The branch breaks and her waist-band falls  
Her dewar gathers up the waist-band

Her husband gathers up her hair  
 In the Ganges she washes her waist-band  
 In the Jamna she washes her hair  
 She dries her waist-band on a bamboo pole  
 Over her arm she dries her hair  
 Rohilla Ho !

575

O THE potter of Garha Mandla !  
 Say to the potter, O brother  
 Make me a beautiful pot  
 For others make it as you will  
 For me make it with care  
 On the mouth make pictures of my friends  
 And every day I'll go with them  
 Laughing and playing for water  
 On the side draw a pair of cranes  
 They will laugh together  
 In the middle of the night.

576

ON the banks of the river grow the bel trees  
 And bear much fruit, Rohilla Ho !  
 Thakur Deo, go out with your golden stick  
 Go and knock down the fruit, Rohilla Ho !  
 Gently Thakur Deo strikes the tree  
 But it neither moves nor shakes, Rohilla Ho !  
 With a heavy blow Thakur Deo brings down  
 A shower of fruit, Rohilla Ho !  
 Pick up a clothful, pick up a basketful  
 Carry them home on your head.

577

GODDESS Ganges, Goddess Ganges  
 In your waves are bathed  
 The eight parts of my body  
 Without water the fish  
 Without wind the grain  
 Without worship Bhajli Dai  
 Withers.

## GAURA SONGS

**G**AURA songs are sung in honour of the marriage of Maha-deo and Parvati. This is celebrated by Gond, Panka, Kol and others at Dassara and the songs and rejoicing continue till Diwali.

578

THERE'S a little path in Namnagar .  
Thakur Deo is riding his mare  
*Khadabad khadabad* he makes the mare gallop  
Down falls the flower from his turban  
The water-girls of Namnagar crowd round  
Pick up my flower and give it to me  
Water-girls, give me the flower for my hair  
O Thakur Deo, we won't pick it up  
Your mother can't pick it up for you  
Your sister can pick it up for you  
Your elder wife can pick it up for you  
Your elder wife picks up your flower every day  
But for us you are like the wild fig flower.

It is very rare to see a wild fig flower, but it is thought exceedingly lucky to do so. People say to a friend who is seldom seen, 'You are like a wild fig flower, we never see you.'

## HOLI SONGS

THE Holi Festival is observed by the aborigines of the Mai-kal Hills mainly as an excuse for a drink and a holiday. It is connected by some of them with the death of Ravan and its chief feature, the burning of a great pile of wood before dawn, is sometimes believed to represent the burning of the corpse of Ravan on his pyre. The games and songs that follow represent the rejoicings over the death of an enemy. Eleven months later, Ravan's death ceremonies are performed at the Chherta Festival, when the people enjoy a feast called Ravan-chokni-gato.

The Holi fire is made of any kind of wood, but should have a semur pole standing up in the middle. It is considered very lucky if the wooden triangle on which the Chamar dries his cow-hide can be stolen and thrown on the pile of wood. The pyre must be lit before dawn and, if possible, by a virgin, that is, an unmarried boy. When the fire blazes up the people watch to see which side it will fall. If it goes to the east, it is considered lucky. The semur branch is pulled out and the bark removed. Bits of cord are made of the bark, and the boys light these at the fire and burn people with them, crying out that 'This will take away your sin.'

The Holi fire is regarded as 'virgin fire' and has the same magical value as the virgin fire of the Agaria.

Later in the day and for several days following the people sing the Holi or Phag songs. They sit very close together in a circle round the drums (mandar, dholki or timki). They sing with great vigour, clapping their hands and gesticulating. In the remoter villages coloured water is not much used. But the women have the right to catch and beat any man who does not purchase his safety with a small present. This is probably a relic of the old tradition of the Striya Raj, when women dressed up as men and ruled the country for a few days.

The Holi or Phag songs are for the most part coarse and obscene with little poetry. But we have been able to collect a few which have some virtue in them.

579

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, don't go to the bazaar  
 With kajal in your eyes  
 For even without it  
 Your eyes are beautiful.

580

THE bed is ready  
 My samdhin has come to the house  
 My wife was on the way, but I didn't know  
 My wife had reached the court, but I didn't know  
 My wife had reached the verandah, but I didn't know  
 The bed was ready, my samdhin had come  
 My wife opened the door, but I didn't know  
 My wife approached the bed  
 And then at last I knew she was there.

This is the kind of 'risky' song, gradually approaching an exciting and improper climax, which is the delight of the Holi singers.

581

O MOTHER, old mother  
 Coming from Pipariya  
 Your voice goes *jhane jhana* everywhere  
 Old mother comes and says  
 Give me some toe-rings  
 I'll put them on and go to the bazaar.

*Doko dai*, which we have translated old mother, is a humorous expression. The old lady, of course, demands every sort of ornament and cloth, including the most intimate forms of underwear.

582

CARPENTER, you've brought a little swing  
 My life depends on you, my carpenter  
 Where was the swing made?  
 In what market was it sold?  
 The swing was made in Garha  
 It was sold in Balaghat.

583

PIPING of the flute on Jamna's banks  
 What is it made of, and who plays that flute?  
 How is the water of the Jamna river?  
 The flute is made of gold  
 It is played by Krishna  
 Blue is the water of the Jamna river.

584

GENTLY, slowly tattoo her body  
 Madman, you have made her red  
 Take my husband's sister first  
 Then gently slowly tattoo me  
 My husband's sister's skin is fair  
 And it hurts her body  
 Madman, you have made her red.  
 Treat her body gently, slowly  
 On her body Krishna's beauty  
 Rama's grandeur be on mine  
 Madman, what will you take for her?  
 Madman, what will you take for me?

585

WHERE does the oil-press come from?  
 Whose is the pestle?  
 Fie on you, boy  
 My sex is the mortar  
 Your stick is the pestle  
 All day the breasted ox goes round.

586

*Arē ha* the English have displayed their power  
 They rule over the land  
 Lord of the land, you are full of wisdom  
 You make roads  
 You make the railway line run round  
 You spread stones and gravel and lay lines upon it  
 Without horse or bullock you drive the engine  
 In the engine is Kali Mata  
 At the station the Bengali takes the tickets  
 When the train goes the bell clangs

Loudly sounds the whistle  
 The station master talks on the wire  
*Arē ha* the English have displayed their power  
 They are full of wisdom.

587

GUESTS, you have come when my parents were away  
 You have come when the house is lonely  
 How can I honour you in a lonely house?  
 My brother is away  
 My father is away  
 You have come to a lonely house.

588

FOUR gossips meet and go for water  
 All four are of one colour  
 Chatting to each other  
 They go to the well for water.  
 One gossip says, My husband drinks opium  
 His eyes start out, his cheeks are hollow  
 His face is withered up.  
 The second gossip says, My husband drinks ganja  
 And where he meets his friends there he remains.  
 The third gossip says, My husband drinks liquor  
 And everything in the house  
 He has sold and ruined.  
 The fourth gossip says, My husband is a rake  
 He has both syphilis and gonorrhoea  
 And all our wealth is gone.

589

BRING bamboo, bring bamboo  
 When they brought the bamboos  
 Dangan the Chamar was born  
 When Dangan the Chamar made shoes  
 Chhotu the barber was born  
 When Chhotu the barber began to use his razor  
 The Dhimar boy was born  
 When the Dhimar boy cast his net  
 Muria Baital was born  
 When Muria Baital chewed bones  
 Dukalu Ganda was born

When Dukalu Ganda arranged his warp  
 The Brahmin's house was burnt  
 The Brahmin Deota thought and thought  
 Then he arranged a pig-hunt  
 When they divided the pork  
 Every house observed the feast.

590

ON the day Krishna played the flute  
 The three worlds were enchanted  
 What was the flute made of  
 And how was it tied  
 On the day Krishna charmed the world?  
 With bones and flesh the flute was made  
 With love it was tied.

591

DIVE down, Dhimar, to get the fish  
 Dive deep with your bald head  
 The other Dhimar got one or two kotri  
 But I caught two or four padina  
 The other Dhimar sold their fish for one or two pice  
 But I sold mine for two or four rupees  
 The other Dhimar sit at the edge of the bazaar  
 But I sit right in the middle  
 My Dhimrin sits with thighs parted.

592

MAY my madman's earnings be burnt, my Raja  
 Fifty-three have come, fifty-six have come  
 And all we can do is to dance  
 My madman goes to others' houses, opens their doors and  
 eats their basi  
 When he has eaten, he mends the roofs of all the village  
 If he earns a rupee he gives it to the elders or feeds the  
 boys on khichri  
*Khor khor* he goes as a beggar dangling his sikka  
 But I fall at your feet, chirota bhaji, it is you who have kept  
 me alive  
 This impotent fool says to his wife, Come let us go and  
 dig the road  
 We'll get two annas each; we'll eat half and save the rest.  
 O may my madman's earnings be burnt, my Raja.

## JOKER SONGS

593

WHEN a wife is stout and strong  
The husband's very lucky.  
When with her own hands she can drag a cart  
What need of buffaloes?  
When she can reach up to the roof herself  
What need of pillars in the house?  
When her leg is strong as a pestle  
She can lift it up and husk the rice  
When she has squinting eyes  
She can use them as lamps to light the house  
When a wife is really ugly  
The husband's very lucky.

594

He's very lucky when she's tall and fat  
He's lucky if she's stumpy as a shrub  
When a wife's eyes are full of pus and dirt  
There's never any lack of ghee  
She is always ready  
When he comes like stormy water  
Upright as a pestle  
There's no need of a pillar in the house  
When she can hold up the roof with her hand.

The word 'joker' has penetrated even the wilds of Mandla as a result of the introduction of playing cards by merchants and subordinate officials. Joker songs are used during Holi, at marriages and indeed at any time when the men are in festive mood.



## **DADARA SONGS**



## DADARA SONGS

**D**ESPITE the similarity of name, there is no connexion between these and the Dadaria songs. The Dadaria are short, often rhymed, often only two-lined, songs sung unaccompanied and antiphonally by men and women. The Dadara are longer songs accompanied by the dhol drum and usually sung only by women. They are common at the Tija and Holi Festivals, when a child is born and at weddings. They are generally somewhat more sophisticated in tone than the Dadaria and are more popular among the Raj-Gond, Panka and Hindu cultivators. The Dadara often rhyme and are elaborately constructed.

595

*Ham dono teshan par milengē milengē  
Tum dilli piha ham āgre ji, ham dono chitti se milengē  
Tum motē piha ham patle ji, ham dono kānte se tolengē  
Tum gorē piha ham sāwre ji, ham dono sānche me dhalengē.*  
We two will meet at the railway station  
You are in Delhi, darling, and I am in Agra. We two  
will meet by letter.  
You are fat, darling, I am thin. We two will be weighed  
in scales.  
You are fair, darling, I am brown. We two will be made  
into images.

596

SHADE of the heat falls on my body.  
There is no mango or tamarind  
The koel cries from the ground  
Shade of the heat falls on my body  
There is no one to feel my pulse  
There is no doctor anywhere  
The koel cries from the ground  
Shade of the heat falls on my body.

597

Go to the bazaar and quickly come again  
Get yourself a dhoti and a sari for your sister  
Get yourself a turban and anklets for your sister.

598

FROM Mandla has come a clever gambler  
 See how cleverly he plays  
 My toe-rings he has won  
 My anklets he has won  
 He has put his hand on my broad anklets  
 My skirt he has won  
 My belt he has won  
 He has put his hand on my blouse  
 Clever is the gambler who has come from Mandla.

599

My lord is fair  
 And I dark as a cloud  
 If I were beautiful  
 I would sit in my lord's lap  
 And play in his bed  
 If I were lovely as a fish  
 I would sport with him in the water  
 If I were beautiful as a deer  
 I would dwell with him in the forest.

600

DRIVER, driver, drive the motor  
 Tell me when you're hungry  
 And I'll give you stale rice  
 Tell me when you're thirsty  
 And I'll let you drink where they wash the clothes  
 Tell me when you're sleepy  
 And I'll put you to bed in the graveyard.

601

SWEET-SCENTED is your house, my Raja  
 Fragrance of attar fills the room  
 Sweet-scented is your house  
 There is a bed both soft and white  
 How I long to sport on it  
 Sweet-scented is your house, my Raja.

602

THE girl comes *runjun*, all her anklets sounding  
 Khir she eats and oil-fried bread with great delight  
 But to me she gives last night's supper

And a little rice-water  
 She sleeps on her white soft bed  
 But to me she gives kodon straw  
 Full of thorns to sleep in  
 The girl comes *runjun*, all her anklets sounding.

## 603

Be not proud of your sweet body  
 The moon and sun were proud and met disaster  
 For eclipses catch them  
 Be not proud of your sweet body.

Be not proud of your young body  
 The fish in the water were proud  
 And they too came to trouble  
 For the net has covered them  
 Be not proud of your young body.

Be not proud of your swift body  
 The deer in the forest were proud  
 But they too came to trouble  
 For the Bahelia sets traps for them  
 Be not proud of your swift body.

Be not proud of your fair body  
 The birds in the woods were proud  
 And they too came to trouble  
 For a great wind came and blew them away  
 Be not proud of your fair body.

## 604

ALWAYS take me to the bazaar  
 My life cannot be without it  
 What strange things come to a bazaar  
 How well they are arranged  
 My life cannot be without it  
 In a bazaar you can get beads and pearls  
 Toe-rings are there set in a row  
 Phundara are strung on a cord  
 My life cannot be without it  
 In the bazaar are friends of equal age  
 Laughing they go round and round  
 Take me to the bazaar  
 For I cannot live without it.



**SONGS OF SNAKE-BITE**



## SONGS OF SNAKE-BITE

THE climax of the great Saila dance competitions is a remarkable exercise when the long line of dancers transforms itself into a living snake, of which the leader is the head, which continually tries to bite its own tail. The dance is an exciting one to watch for there is much inconvenience and even danger should the snake succeed in striking. The long line of men twists and twines about the dancing-ground; the head lashes violently round; the tail swings out of the way. Should the head actually succeed in biting the tail, all the ceremonies attending an actual case of snake-bite must be performed.

The danger of death by snake-bite is very real in the Maikal Hills. The countryside abounds in cobras, kraits and other snakes which seek the warmth and shelter of house and village, especially during the rains. In a case of snake-bite the victim, it is believed, can only be saved by a protracted ceremony, the Jagar. This sometimes lasts all night and includes many different songs.

The first element in the treatment of snake-bite is the recitation of a charm called Bhar Bandhni, which must be done immediately on the very site of the disaster to stop the poison getting further into the victim's system.

605

I BIND his feet  
I bind the scrub jungle  
I bind the rivers and the seven seas  
I bind the sixteen streams  
I bind the boundaries of twelve villages  
I bind the water-girls of the well  
I bind the resting-place of cattle  
I bind the women on every road and path  
I bind the eye of the looker  
I bind the ear of the hearer  
What has been tied let it remain.

Then the victim is brought to his house but he is not allowed to cross the threshold. Should he do so the snake

will strike him again. The village people gather and sit round. They bring a wooden stool which must have no iron nail in it. On this stool a pile of rice is made and with one finger somebody makes wavy lines of rice across the stool to suggest the movements of a snake. By this time probably someone in the village who knows the ritual, and who is called the Guru, will have arrived. He now prepares a pot filled with water and a few grains of rice and places on the top a lighted lamp.

Then the assembled villagers sing the first song calling on the gods to come and help. They especially implore the aid of Thakur Deo, for it is believed that if he comes all the others must accompany him. After they have been singing for some time Thakur Deo and Nang Deo come together and possess one of the onlookers. Anybody may be 'possessed' in this manner but it is usually someone who is well known in the village as a Barua—or a specially sensitive medium who is accustomed to revealing the will of the gods. The Barua immediately begins to behave exactly like a snake. He falls on the ground and wriggles his body to and fro. He raises his head and hisses. He has to be given milk to drink. Then he gets very angry and tries to attack and bite the villagers. When he does this they sing the Dularni song.

## 606

*Tarināki nāna nāna re nāna  
Tari nāna mor nāna*  
The booth is made of sarai and saja.  
On top are the green bamboos  
From what city comes the lota?  
From what city comes the haldi?  
From Bramhapuri comes the lota  
From Namnagar comes the haldi  
From the north the Suhania was called  
She was the darling daughter of all the snakes  
The magic was thrown on this darling daughter  
By the Malin daughter of Bara Bathi Bengala  
The snake daughter opened her eyes  
The magic of Bengal took flight  
And woke up all the armies.

When the Barua hears this song he is quietened. It is supposed to have the same effect upon him as the flute of

the snake-charmer has on his cobras. Then the Guru approaches him and asks :

607

WILL it be dark or moonlight?  
 Will he live or die?  
 Will our charm succeed or fail?  
 Mother, what knowledge have we black-faced men?  
 This thing we do, will it succeed or no?  
 Our ears are deaf  
 Our eyes are blind  
 Our mouths are dumb  
 Round our necks we put a cloth  
 In our mouths we take grass  
 And bow low before you  
 With ten fingers we pray  
 With five fingers we make an offering  
 Give us wisdom  
 Even if we have made mistakes  
 Let our charm succeed  
 Give us wisdom  
 If a child excretes on his mother's lap  
 You do not cut off her lap and cast it away  
 We are your spittle  
 Your excreta is our richest feast  
 With your urine we clean our mouths  
 We have grown up in your lap  
 There we have played and wept  
 Where can we go if you cast us off?  
 Why has this thunder-bolt fallen on this poor man?

Then Thakur Deo, speaking through the mouth of the Barua, tells the people what is going to happen and how to avert the danger of the poison. 'I will collect all the evil', he cries, 'and it will be mine'. Then the people pray to Thakur Deo that he will remain. 'You remain on one shoulder and let Nang Deo remain on the other; together you will be able to remove the poison'. After this the people sing the Nang Chadhani song in order to ensure that the Snake God will possess the Barua.

608

HE puts his leaf-shield on his shoulder  
 And goes to graze the cobra, mother  
 He goes to graze the cobra  
 All the snakes are in the cow's resting-place  
 But one of them is absent  
 The Parrot Cobra is in the cow's resting-place  
 The Jaddu Cobra is in the cow's resting-place  
 Paharchitti Snake is in the cow's resting-place  
 But the Domi Snake is absent.

After this song has been sung it is believed that the Nang Deo comes upon the man and remains. Then they sing another song, the Nang Khojni, to discover what kind of snake it was that bit the man.

609

WHAT cobra is swaying to and fro in the field?  
 What snake is hanging from the roof?  
 The Jaddu Snake is swaying to and fro in the field  
 The Paharchitti Snake is hanging from the roof  
 The Milk Cobra is swaying to and fro in the field  
 The Pigeon Snake is hanging from the roof

—and so on taking the names of every snake known to them.

Directly the name of the snake which bit the man is mentioned the Barua falls into violent convulsions and from his behaviour they know which has been at fault.

Then, once this is known, the Barua begins to imitate the behaviour of that particular snake and the assembled villagers proceed to the singing of a song which they believe will ensure the transfer of all the poison that is in the body of the victim into the body of the Barua.

610

FROM the earth the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the water  
 From the water the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the hillock  
 From the hillock the poison has started

It has started and stopped at the ant-hill  
 From the ant-hill the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the cross-roads  
 At the cross-roads the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the boundary  
 From the boundary the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the well  
 At the well the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the path  
 At the path the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the courtyard  
 At the courtyard the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the roof  
 At the roof the poison has started  
 It has started and filled the house  
 At the house the poison has started  
 It has started and stopped at the stool  
 From the stool the poison has filled his body  
 O it has filled his little toe  
 It has gone from his toe to his foot  
 It has gone from his foot to his calf  
 It has gone from his calf to his knee  
 It has gone from his knee to his waist  
 It has gone from his waist to his chest  
 It has gone from his chest to his shoulders  
 It has gone from his shoulders to his beard  
 It has gone from his beard to his thirty-two teeth  
 It has gone from his teeth to his eyes  
 It has gone from his eyes to his forehead  
 It fills and it moves  
 Half the heavens  
 It falls back  
 And fills the water-pot.

This rather tedious song is sung over and over again with every sort of topographical and physical elaboration. After it has been sung ten or twelve times it is believed that the poison has gone completely into the Barua. At the same time the people sing a number of what are called Hakni Songs which are intended to aid the driving out of the poison from the victim's body. Each of these songs represents the Haka or 'beat' of one or other of the great Guru.

## 611

GURU upon Guru, Guru upon Guru  
 All of them are proud  
 But I am the Guru who has no pride  
 All the Guru glisten before the eyes  
 But my Guru is full of devotion  
 In the water, on the earth  
 He helps and saves  
 Other Guru are but partridges and quails  
 But mine is a hawk.

## 612

I KILL them on the wing  
 I hit their wings as they fly in the air  
 When they fall down I take their lives  
 O Haka of Daugun Guru  
 Awake! Arise! Beware!

## 613

ONE two three four  
 Five six seven eight  
 Nine ten eleven twelve  
 Thirteen fourteen fifteen sixteen  
 Seventeen eighteen nineteen  
 O the Haka of the twenty Guru.

## 614

THE mango branches have spread everywhere  
 Above the mango blossoms  
 Below sits Bhainsasur on guard  
 This Mata does not know he is there  
 She has eaten three and thirty cocks  
 Bhainsasur is the buffalo's son  
 Searching searching for food he grazes  
 He devours even the devils  
 The Mata laughs at him and says  
 We plough with buffaloes for oil-seed  
 We cut their horns to make our bows  
 We cut their tails for bow-strings  
 With the buffalo-bows we shoot a thousand arrows  
 This is the Haka of Guru Mahadeo  
 Awake! Arise! Beware!

615

THE bangles sound *atak atak*  
 The anklets sound *chatak chatak*  
 In the sandal-hill my magic's working  
 Cobra, you have but four teeth  
 I have thirty-two  
 You may run, but how far will you go?  
 The goose is swooping down  
 This is the Haka of the goose  
 Awake! Arise! Beware!

616

HE has a black blanket on his shoulder  
 And a golden rope in his hand  
 You beggar of the jungle run  
 The thief of Bengal has come  
 This is the Haka of the mongoose  
 Awake! Arise! Beware!

Now if the omens have been right and the charm properly performed, all the poison should have left the victim and filled the body of the Barua. They bring water in a plate and the Barua vomits the poison into it. Afterwards he is again given milk to drink. Now the snake is put to the oath. The Guru cuts a little bit of bamboo from the roof and removes a bit of the bark with which the roof is tied. He puts this with salt and coal into a pot. The people gather round and lifting up the pot they sing :

617

SWEAR swear O cobra  
 Take the oath we give you  
 If you break it  
 You will burn like oil  
 You will melt like salt in the rain  
 Kalsasur will torment you  
 If you break it  
 You will wither like the bamboo  
 You will burn like bamboo slats  
 The Grain Mother will torment you  
 Swear swear O cobra  
 Take the oath we give you.

Then carrying the pot the Guru takes the victim to the front of his house and makes him stand before the door. The Guru strikes the roof three times with an axe. Every time he does so the victim falls inert to the ground. Then the victim and the Barua are taken out to an ant-hill or a date palm tree. Coconut and incense is offered and a final song is sung.

## 618

MAY the poison come out and his body grow cool as water!  
 May the aches in every part of his body  
 And the pain in his belly be stilled  
 May he once more bathe his body  
 May he once more take his food  
 May he once more walk in his courtyard  
 May he once more walk in the forest and the open field  
 There may the tiger and the bear  
 Turn into stones before him  
 May every snake become a stick  
 May thorns and stubble melt like wax  
 When he walks by night, let him not go as an ant  
 Stumbling on his way  
 May light dawn on him!

They return to the house and the victim now completely cured falls at the feet of each of his neighbours in turn saying, 'You have given me a new birth'. They begin to drink liquor and become very jolly. The man who has been bitten exclaims, 'As I have been reborn, now I must have a new wife' and so on.

Last of all the rice on the little stool which is believed to be full of poison is distributed. The Barua again falls to the ground like a snake and wriggling about amidst the company gives a few grains to one and another. He presses the grains against knee or hand and the person chosen has to sing one of the Hakni songs before he will go away. The final test of the Barua is that he should be able to discover anyone of the company who hides himself outside in the village and make him eat the grains of rice.

It may be noted that the Gond and Pardhan do not depend for safety from snake-bite only on the ceremony which we

have just described. They also use various medical and magical remedies. For example, a vegetable called musakan is cooked and two or three doses are given. It is supposed to absorb the poison in the stomach, which is then thrown out in the process of excretion. The very bitter padhin creeper is also used. Its juice is itself poisonous and so only four fingers of it are given. The result is supposed to be to eliminate the poison through the urine.

For the bite of the snake called parrowan, earth from an ant-hill is brought, mixed with warm water and the swollen part is fomented to bring the swelling down. The bark of the mendla tree may be ground up and used as a poultice. For internal use the batta herb is given.

What are called chhibaki leaves are also given in an emergency. In Patangarh many years ago the father of Dani, the well-known magician, was watching a fight between a cobra and a giant rat. Whenever the rat felt the poison working it used to go and eat two-and-a-half chhibaki leaves. Dani's father removed the shrub and when the rat next came to eat the leaves and was unable to get them, it died and the snake devoured it. Some time later a Gond named Musaka was bitten by a cobra and had nearly died when Dani's father gave him two-and-a-half chhibaki leaves and cured him immediately, in gratitude for which the Gond gave him a black buffalo.

There are, of course, a great many cures for snake-bite. One, recorded in North India, is to throw a cowrie into the air and utter the appropriate mantra. The snake will come back, forgive the man who has been bitten and he will recover.<sup>1</sup> In the Punjab it is a charm against snake-bite to smoke one of the tail feathers of the peacock in a pipe. In Kumaun when a man is bitten by a snake, his friends pull three hairs from his scalp-lock and strike him three times on the top of the head with the first joint of the middle finger, a kind of blow which in ordinary cases is regarded as very dangerous.

Crooke gives a charm for snake-bite which may be compared with those in this Section.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *North Indian Notes and Queries*, ii, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Crooke, i, 239 and ii, 45.

True god, true hero, Hanuman !  
The snake moves in a tortuous way.  
The male and female weasel  
Come out of their hole to destroy it.  
Which poison will they devour ?  
First they will eat the black Karait snake,  
Then the snake with the jewel, then the Ghor snake.  
I pray to thee for help, my true teacher.

**A PARDHAN EPIC**



## THE SONG OF HIRAKHAN KSHATTRI

THE epic song of Hirakhan Kshattri which we give here as a sample of the Pardhan Gondwana songs, some of which are printed in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*, was recorded in Patangarh village from the charming and celebrated Gunia Dani. This epic is sung by the Pardhan as they go on their annual begging expeditions to the houses of Gond Thakur of the same clan.

The plot of the epic is rather clumsy and abounds in rapid transitions and breaks in the narrative which are probably due to the fact that everybody is supposed to know the story already. Dani discussed the incidents of the tale and its characters as if they were really living; he considered, for example, in all seriousness how it was that Paniya Dokara had a house both in Raiyya Sindhola and Hiragarh and explained it.

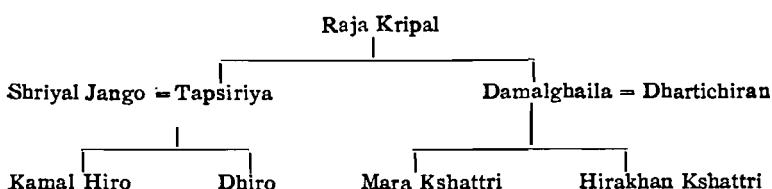
It may be, of course, that we have the song only in a degenerate version. The first incident where the girls go to bathe for the Parab Festival is quite unconnected with the main course of the story, and seems to be introduced only for the purpose of telling Kamal Hiro that she is the wife of the Raja. If it seems incredible to the Western reader that a married girl should grow to maturity without knowing either that she was married or who her husband was, we can only say that the incident is a favourite one with the story-teller and occurs again, for example, in the song of Shri Somni Raja sung by the Muria of Bastar State.

Again the figure of Bodrahin, who appears in the opening part of the song intended to play an important part in the narrative, disappears all too soon. So does Maradlangha the amusing Kotwar. In the more carefully constructed stories this would not happen.

We are not told until nearly the end why it is that when Hirakhan reaches Raiyya Sindhola he finds the city deserted of its men-folk. The reason is, of course, that Raja Tapsiriya has taken all the men away for his twelve years' campaign against Bara Bathi Bengala where he hopes to kill the golden boar. Hirakhan, who set out expecting to have to fight the army of Raiyya Sindhola, finds himself

instead acting as its ally, and it is only after he has conquered Bara Bathi Bengala that an act of treachery on the part of his father-in-law (who is also, as is the case in a cousin marriage, his maternal uncle) forces him to fight against him and destroy him.

The epic has the virtue of introducing a comparatively small number of characters. A genealogical table will show who they are and their relationship to one another.



IN the Kingdom of Hirakhan these were the cities—  
 Hiragarh, Bairagarh, Taigarh, Toigarh,  
 Sirpurtola, Bhanpurnagri and Batukatola;  
 There lived the true Raja of the Gondwana.  
 In the fort beneath a pipal tree was the stone,  
 The paras stone that turned iron to gold.  
 It was covered with sandal wood;  
 Below it was the Raja's umbrella,  
 And to support him a throne large as the moon.  
 For Hirakhan the Raja there was a double fan,  
 And above a whisk of hair.

In his kingdom people visited the homes of widows;  
 In orphans' houses there were marriages;  
 In the houses of married women elephants swayed to and fro.  
 The courtyards were made of metal and copper;  
 As soon as you stepped on it, the courtyard rang with music.  
 The lanes were shady with kadam trees;  
 At intervals were placed rows of musicians.  
 There were groves of mango, flowers in blossom,  
 Hibiscus and marigold, champa and mogra flowers  
 Unrivalled in the world.

In this kingdom the Ahirin girls went to collect their money  
 Riding in bullock-carts;  
 The Ahir boys went to milk the cows on horseback.  
 Thus in Hiragarh lived the true Raja of the Gondwana.

The roofs of the Koshta were so close together  
 That your body could not pass between.  
 There was Baiju with his bottle of liquor,  
 Ghorsu who always distributed the drinks,  
 Bhikku who was always tasting,  
 Shiva for ever drinking,  
 These lived in Hiragarh.

Mahangu was the Manjhi.  
 Korbasera's son was Koelabasera,  
 Koelabasera's son was Hadibhaj,  
 Hadibhaj's son was Maradlangha Ganda,  
 These lived in Hiragarh.  
 In such a place lived the real Raja of the Gondwana,  
 Hirakhan Kshattri who ruled over it.

There were the great swords, one to kill the wild buffaloes,  
 One for wild elephants, one to destroy worthless men.  
 There was a spear carried by four and twenty men,  
 Whose boss was big as a dali-basket,  
 Its blade broad as a winnowing-fan.  
 There were seven points on that one shaft;  
 Its name was Bairisal, the destroyer of enemies.

There was liquor in a bottle that was never finished,  
 Tobacco in a pouch that was never exhausted,  
 A leaf-cup that was never dry,  
 If anyone was drunk he would go into the road and shout,  
 'Son of his mother, glory of his father,  
 Great buffalo of the herd is Hirakhan Raja'.

After twelve years and thirteen ages,  
 The Parab Festival came to the Raisur Lake.  
 In every village it was proclaimed.  
 All the lovely girls came to bathe in the lake.  
 But what does Limtarihin the old woman say  
 To Paniya Dokari? 'Eho, didi,  
 Who knows if Limtariha Dokara will let us go to bathe.

He suspects every woman in this kingdom.  
If he doesn't let us go, the impotent fellow,  
I'll take my shoe and beat him'.

When the Festival was proclaimed, all the beautiful girls,  
The girls of the village, got ready to go.  
The first rank was of little girls,  
The second was of ripe and lovely maidens,  
The third was of the middle-aged,  
The fourth was of the aged whose breasts hung down like  
shoes.  
With them Bodrahin got ready to go.

From this girl's navel projected a stump.  
So large it was that the very ring round it  
Contained enough iron to make twelve harrows.  
The tip was long as a digging-stick.  
It was tied round with twelve phundara,  
It was tied round with thirteen cords,  
It was tied round with nine baskets of cord.  
So Bodrahin prepared to go to the lake.<sup>1</sup>

Bodrahin had six maids to carry her stump.  
Each supported it on a turban tied about her head.  
Even then the ox-goad at the tip projected  
And was borne by a black cock which strutted in front crying  
*Kukure koo.*  
If one of the girls stumbled, Bodrahin would poke her back  
And the girl would jump *kalbal*.  
As they started out, the earthen drums sounded *dum dum*,  
The courtyard of bronze went *tan tan*,  
The rhythm of the copper drums went twelve kos all around.  
The boys of Bhango Tola were playing *killi*.<sup>2</sup>  
When they saw all these girls on the way,  
One of the boys asked, 'What marriage party's this?'  
'Don't you see, these are women of our own village.  
For Parab has fallen and they are going to bathe.'  
Another boy says, 'One year Hirakhan was being married :

<sup>1</sup> In olden days, say the Pardhan, women with great umbilical stumps were not unknown. They were specially honoured by Rajas and had great influence over their own sex. A pig was offered to them every third day, and was sacrificed on the stump itself.

<sup>2</sup> Also called *gilli*. Boys strike bits of wood into the air and have to hit them with a stick before they fall to the ground.

There was Parab then and the girls went to bathe in that very lake,  
 They brought cholera to the village,  
 And that year my father and mother died,  
 That is why today I am an orphan'.  
 A fourth boy answers him, 'If that is so, let us turn these girls back',  
 And the boys ran together to turn them back.

Some of the girls they caught by the breasts,  
 Some they threw down and climbed upon them.  
 The girls shrieked and ran away.  
 But when Bodrahan heard it, she said to her six maidens,  
 'Let there be maggots in the privates of these impotent youths!'  
 She raised her stump straight to the sky and ran after them.  
 She pushed them in the back and they bled and bled.  
 Hardly were the boys saved, they ran home weeping;  
 They went to Mahangu Mahila and told him what had happened.

Mahangu Mahila got up, his pyjama was of python skin;  
 His coat of leopard skin, his cap of peacock feathers;  
 His turban was a shining silver-spotted snake.  
 With a great red stick Mahangu Mahila came out,  
 And stood below the fig-tree in the midst of the village.  
 When the girls came weeping to the fig-tree,  
 Mahangu Mahila lifted his stick and beat them.  
 'You are those very girls who went to bathe  
 When Hirakhan was married.  
 You brought the cholera to us and destroyed half the kingdom.  
 Today, you monkey-faced excreters, you would go again.  
 Turn back or I will kill you.'

When Bodrahan heard this she raised her stump straight like a spear.  
 She rushed at Mahangu Mahila the impotent.  
 She struck him with her stump and he slid twelve hands away.  
 Bodrahan hung him over her stump, his backside was nought but blood.  
 Mahangu with great difficulty saved himself,

And ran to where a woman was making a hole in her cooking-pot.

He hid behind her, but that woman said,  
'Wait, wait, where are you forcing yourself?'  
'Keep quiet, they caught me with a grazing-girl.  
That is why I'm trying to hide.'

The girls went to the tank and took off all their clothes.  
Bodrahin was playing with them and teasing them.  
Into one she'd push her stump, she'd sit another on it;  
She would lift her up with it right into the sky.  
So they bathed joking and laughing together.

Now when the girls had bathed, they sat down on the bank  
To comb their hair and talk. 'This same impotent Mahangu  
Tried to stop the girls when Kamal Hiro was married.  
To such antics his organ is accustomed.  
May his ashes soon blow through the air, the impotent!'

Then Paniya Dokari, whose breasts swung like country shoes,  
Says to Bodrahin, 'Is not this Mahangu your mother's sister's  
son?'

Are you not brother and sister? That is why Mahangu used  
to have you.'

Bodrahin says, 'Not so, grannie, though it's true he is my  
brother.

We have only met now after many days,  
And I couldn't go to him because of the stump.  
That's why he mounted it as if it were a horse.  
That's how we met each other, but we couldn't do anything,  
So I put it round my shoulder and as we couldn't do it,  
I was angry and attacked him. I got onto him  
And as I was thrusting my stump into his body,  
You came and separated us at Kamal Hiro's wedding.'

Hearing this Kamal Hiro was astonished and asked,  
'When was I married and to whom? I will tell Hirakhan  
Kshattri and make him beat you.'

'O Kamal Hiro, if you do not trust me, go to the other  
village

'And ask Malin Dokari. If it is not true, you may bury me  
upside down.'

At these words Kamal Hiro left them like an arrow  
So swift that none could see her, and she reached Malin  
Para.

She went by the houses of the small,  
The houses of the great, the grass huts of the poor.  
When Malin Dokari saw her coming she grew anxious,  
thinking,

'What a lovely girl this is! But why is she coming here?  
O God, I have made a hundred thousand garlands for her.  
Every day I have given one, what wrong have I done  
That Kamal Hiro should come to my hut?'  
In her mind half was fear and half was courage.

She began to hide her treasures.  
She said, 'Come my daughter, sit down here with me.'  
'Why should I sit? My life is boiling like khichri.  
These girls were saying that Hirakhan Kshattri was my  
husband.'

They say it was at my marriage that this Mahangu started  
some quarrel.'

Hearing this, the old Malin chuckled *khad khad khad*.  
'O little girl, you have grown up like a castor plant.  
But long since I settled here, clearing the jungle with these  
hands,  
And I know the history of old.  
This garden is made of the bones of my ancestors.  
It is true that Hirakhan is married to you.'

'Have you gone mad, grannie, that you should call my own  
brother my husband?'  
'No, daughter, you are now twelve years old, the thirteenth  
year has begun to shadow you,  
And yet you do not know your own husband.'  
'What can I say, my mother, you tell me this today.  
Had I known it before, I would have taken my lord  
To see my parents' country.'

Kamal Hiro left the old Malin's house.  
She walked through fifty-one lanes and fifty bazaars.  
Ten thousand dogs barked as she went by.  
She went by the houses of the small,  
The houses of the great, the grass huts of the poor.  
So she came to Hirakhan Kshattri sitting in his Darbar.

Here he was sitting, Hirakhan Kshattri, son of his mother,  
 glory of his father,  
 Great bull of the buffalo herd.  
 By him were the swords that killed wild buffaloes,  
 That killed wild elephants and slaughtered useless men.

The spear Bairisal was standing near by.  
 Red red were his eyes, all his thirty-two teeth  
 Were chewing *charchar*, chewing dreadful poisons.  
 Before him the guards marched up and down with sword-sticks.

There was Jumurkha with his dreadful cannon and Barekhan  
 with his bayonet.

If anyone opposed him, Hirakhan would rise at once;  
 If anyone said, 'Arē' he would take his sword.  
 In the court were sitting Baiju with his liquor bottle,  
 Bhikku always tasting it, Ghorsu giving it away.

There were Manjhi Dokara, Paniya Dokara, Mahila Dokara,  
 Jhalmaha Dokara.

Yet the maiden Kamal Hiro was not shy or afraid.  
 The maiden Kamal Hiro stood firm as a tethering-peg and  
 addressed the Raja.  
 'To increase her love for her husband and her father-in-law's  
 house,  
 A girl should be taken sometimes to her mother.  
 Now take me to my mother's house for eight nights and  
 nine days.  
 If you don't I will stab myself with a sword and die.'  
 Hirakhan gave her no ear and the girl boiled within.  
 At last he said, 'This girl has gone mad. Send her home.  
 Why has she come here?'

But then said Paniya Dokara, Malmaha Dokara, Manjhi  
 Dokara, Mahila Dokara.  
 'The girl has spoken rightly. Ever since you were married,  
 You have never taken her to her mother's house.  
 With what great battles was your marriage ended!  
 Your father had marched on Raiyya Sindhola.  
 They cut off his head while this child was in her cradle;  
 You put her on your back and brought her secretly;  
 You were married on a lid and fan.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is an expression to describe the marriage of babies who are laid on *para*, bamboo lids for covering pots, and fanned with *binjna*, bamboo fans.

Hearing this, Hirakhan Kshattri bent his head.  
 He said to Kamal Hiro, 'Even if you cut your throat,  
 I will not go to the house of my enemy.'  
 At this Kamal Hiro went to her house.  
 She found a broken bed, a broken ghursi;  
 She took them to the stable,  
 And for eight days and nine nights she lay there without  
 food.  
 Every old woman in the village went to persuade her.  
 'O girl, why do you want to take your Raja to the kingdom  
 of his foes?  
 Your father is a wicked man, all Hirakhan's ancestors have  
 fought with him.'  
 Yet the maid neither spoke nor moved, but like a corpse  
 stretched out her hands and feet.  
 The old women went to tell Hirakhan. When he heard he  
 sprang to his feet.  
 'She said, I will die, perhaps she is really dead.'  
 He went to her and said, 'O my Hiro'. When other women  
 heard the Raja's voice,  
 Their muscles would contract with pleasure, but Hiro took  
 no notice.  
 The Raja touched her belly, he touched her hands.  
 When he found no breathing he went apart and wept.  
 He wept holding his head between his hands.  
 How deceitful is the caste of women! He went to her and  
 said,  
 'Hiro, if you really want to go to your mother's house,  
 Then prepare for the journey to Bairagarh.  
 If you get permission from my bhauji Jalabeli, I will go  
 with you.'  
 Hearing this the girl jumped up. She took a maid with  
 her;  
 She walked eight days and nine nights still fasting;  
 She walked one kos, she walked three kos, and she reached  
 Bairagarh.  
 There she saw in Shankar's swing and Durgadevi's upper  
 room,  
 Jalabeli was being swung by her six maidens.  
 Jalabeli was dancing in piles of soft haldi.  
 To swing her three girls stood on one side  
 And pushed her across to the other three.  
 To and fro she flashed like lightning between the golden pillars.

When Jalabeli saw Kamal Hiro she said, 'Go quickly girls.  
My dewarani Kamal Hiro has come  
Wash her feet and make her sit on the jewelled throne.'  
Jalabeli greeted Kamal Hiro and enquired of joy and sorrow.  
'Didi, my husband wants to take me to my mother's house,  
And he wants you to look after our house and door.'

When Jalabeli heard this she caught Kamal Hiro's hair and  
beat her with her feet.

'All our forefathers went to Raiyya Sindhola and died fight-  
ing there.

Only Hirakhan remains as a single wick in the lamp,  
And now you would take him there also.

Before you do I will bury you alive and light a lamp above  
your grave.'

Hardly could Kamal Hiro slip through her hands and run  
back to Hiragarh.

'O my husband, my jethani says, Go girl with joy. You  
were married years ago,

But not once have you seen your mother. I will guard your  
house and door.'

The Kshatri pondered in his mind, 'Now the maid will  
never listen to me.'

He went to ask his mother who was in Damalpaila.

'Mother, tell me of what disease our forefathers died and  
where.'

Hearing this the old woman felt as if her life were flying  
from her body.

'Boy, I know nothing of their deaths, I forgot what disease  
there was.'

After sixty years memory is destroyed, after eighty it is  
cut out of the mind.

I was widowed as a little girl. I ground wheat for some,  
I husked rice for others and thus I fed you and made  
you stand firmly.'

'No, mother, what were your parents' names?'

'I do not know, I have forgotten, son.'

'No, mother, if you have forgotten their names, were you  
dropped down from the sky

Or were you born from an ant-hill?'

'Long long ago, my son, the cholera spread among us.  
Half my forefathers were killed

And I was left beneath a thorny bush.  
There at last they found me and married me to someone.'

'She will never tell me.' So saying the Kshattri left his mother.

With bow in hand he took five pebbles from the road and went.

He passed Hiragarh, Bairagarh, Taigarh, Toigarh, Sirpurtola, Bhanpurnagri, Chhepara and Batukatola  
Till he came to Bhagotola where lived old man Baragathiya.

Nine days before the old man had died, and his old woman was husking grain for his funeral feast.

On the dunghill near by, his tailless cock was grazing.

Round the cock's neck was a bell large as a pot.

'If I kill this cock, in anger she will tell me everything'

Hiding behind something, the Kshattri killed the cock.

Dancing and jumping, the cock went to the old woman.

'Don't dance now, my cock. Tomorrow when we feast for my old man,

You can dance with song and music to your heart's content.'

The cock jumped in the air and died, and the old woman said,  
'He is angry because I wouldn't dance.'

So thinking she brought her pestle and began to dance.

'Get up, get up, my cock without a tail and we will dance again.'

But when she touched him she found him dead with a wound in the neck.

Filled with anger the old woman came from the house.

The Raja was hiding behind a plough, but when she saw him she soon abused him.

'O you impotent, may worms devour your chest, eight basketsful of them,

Nine winnowing-fans of worms and a lampful more for luck !  
May a black cobra chase and bite you !

When you die, may your widow have to beg her food.

Why didn't you show your valour in Raiyya Sindhola,  
Where Raja Tapsiriya cut off your father's head and put it up over the Victory Gate,

Where everyone who goes out kicks it five times with his shoe,

And everyone who comes in kicks it five times again.

It was there you should have shown your valour, but instead  
You come and kill my poor widow's cock, you impotent !'

Then said the Kshattri, 'It was to hear this very matter,  
grandmother,  
That I killed your cock. Why else should I kill it ?'  
'Grandson, if only you had asked me I would have told you.  
Why did you kill my cock without a cause ?  
On this very cock your grandfather would put chilly and  
onion  
And riding on it, go to Chirowoti bazaar.  
It was through this cock we did our trade and made a little  
living.  
Singing to the merchants below the chirota bushes.'  
When the Kshattri heard her tale he was very sorry and gave  
her five gold mohurs  
'Mother, I am going with Kamal Hiro to the land of Raiyya  
Sindhola.'  
'My son, why go to the land of our enemies ? You were  
not taught by your parents.  
You are just a widow's son.' Angrily the Kshattri sat there.  
'I am the messenger of Death. If I go I will ruin their land  
in two-and-a-half minutes.'

Then said the Kshattri to the chaprassi Baskandas,  
'Go and bring Maradlangha, the son of Hadibhaj,  
The son of Koelabasera, the son of Korbasera.'  
For two generations Maradlangha had been Kotwar of the  
family,  
And not one but five chaprassis were ready to fetch him.  
He had stretched his warp, having put on his lingoti  
Which was kept in place with a rotten grass-rope twelve years  
old,  
And the Gandain was stirring the rice-water.  
When Maradlangha saw the chaprassis he ran to hide in the  
pig-stye.  
They began to search for him and shouted abuse.  
'The Raja Saheb wants him. Where is the Kotwar ?'  
The Gandain said, 'O Maharaj, the Kotwar isn't here. I  
was ill and he has gone to the Gunia  
After putting the hens in the pig-stye'. Hearing that, the  
chaprassis

Went straight to the pig-stye and there they found the Kotwar.

They pulled him out by force and pushing him, beating him, took him to the Raja.

When the Kshattri saw him coming, considering that he was his father's Kotwar,  
He spread a good mat for him. 'Johar re Maradlangha Ganda, come and be seated.'

The Kotwar said, 'O Raja, after twelve years and thirteen ages you have remembered me.

Tell me quickly what work you have for me, for I have left the thread stretched on the loom,

And if it breaks my wife will give me no food today.'

'Listen, Maradlangha, Hiragarh is spread out into twelve hamlets.

Go and proclaim in all the twelve hamlets that on the coming Monday I will march on Raiyya Sindhola.

If a single man remains behind I will bury him upside down And I will light a lamp above his feet.'

'O master, I cannot do this in all the twelve hamlets, For my stomach's dry with hunger. Since the day before yesterday I have not drunk rice-water.'

'No, finish the work by midday, and when you have bathed and combed your hair, come and take your food with me.'

But the Ganda would not listen till at last the Kshattri lost his patience

'Go Ganda to the attic on the seventh story and see if there is any food left from last night.'

Maradlangha went up to the attic and said, 'O girls; give me what was left from last night's dinner:

Such is the Kshattri's order. I must take his proclamation to all the twelve hamlets.'

'Go away, you horse-faced pimp! Who will have food for you at such an hour?'

'No, little girls, give me anything even three days old, for my stomach's dry with hunger.'

'Then come and sit, O Ganda'. But then the Ganda said, 'Do not give me pej in leaf-cups but in the wooden trough that my father always used.'

In the courtyard the trough had lain for years, it was so heavy  
 that four and twenty men could hardly carry it.  
 The neighbours always poured their leavings into it, and the  
 cats used to come and feed there.  
 In that great trough some of the cats had drowned.  
 The girls poured in the pej and the Ganda started drinking.  
 Sometimes the cats' bones would come into his mouth and  
 he would chew them up with relish.  
 Four or five troughsful of pej the Ganda drank. 'Now I will  
 take one for my wife.'  
 When he got up he broke the old and rotten string tied  
 round his waist.  
 He sat down to mend it, but when he rose again his old  
 disease forced him to cough.  
 And broke the cord again and he was naked.  
 Filled with shame he ran to hide in the chicken-house  
 And the girls pursued him crying, 'Don't steal our eggs.'

'Girls, I don't want to steal your eggs. I am sitting here for  
*kadi*<sup>1</sup> before I go to proclaim the Raja's message.  
 Go little girls and call my Gandain so that she may drink  
 this pej.'  
 At home the Gandain is sitting anxiously: 'What has the  
 Raja done to my Ganda?'  
 As she was thinking the girls came and said, 'Come, Gandain,  
 your Ganda wants to bring home your pej.'  
 The Gandain says, 'When someone's house is burnt, other  
 people use the fire to warm their buttocks.  
 The chaprassis took and beat my Ganda, but it was just a  
 joke for you.'  
 'No, no, we are not joking. He has drunk his pej and now  
 he is doing *kadi*.'  
 So the Gandain gets up and goes with them. 'O my Ganda,  
 where are you?'

'Come, come here, I am consulting the *kadi*.'  
 When she saw him underneath the chicken-house she said,  
 'What are you doing there?'  
 He whispers to her, 'Don't say anything. I am stealing  
 their eggs and chickens.  
 Come, take them from me quietly.'

<sup>1</sup> Divination by measuring sticks.

She was wearing a sari sixteen cubits long and she spread the end near him.

He took hold of it and began to pull it off her.

They were struggling, but at last he hit her and she let the sari go.

Now she was naked as a cow, and for shame she ran towards the house.

In the streets were hundreds of boys playing and when they saw her,

They thought her some mad woman and pelted her with cow-dung.

The Gandain ran and ran for shame and hid in the ditch below the loom.

There was a black scorpion there and it bit her clitoris.

As she was crying loudly, the Ganda reached the house.

Her sari was round both his legs, the pej was on his head.

He cried, 'O come to help me put this on the ground.'

'May your ashes soon be blown into the air, you impotent !

Wait till I am finished with you. All the boys of the town pelted me with dung and mud.

They thought I was a mad woman and now see what has happened to my clitoris.'

So saying she showed it to him. 'And now, you impotent Ganda, I will stay with you no longer,

Devourer of women, who has killed six wives

I will go as a Paithu wife to old man Madhatti's house and stay there.'

'Go, go, you excreter. I too will bring the old carpenter woman to live with me.

Go, go, one-eyed, ill-omened, I'll roast you like a fish'.

Saying this, he took the dafla drum that only four and twenty men could carry

And the stick that was carried by eighteen and went out to proclaim the Raja's order.

He beat the drum and cried, 'Listen my brothers, we are at war with Raiyya Sindholā :

Prepare to march upon them. This is the Raja's order. If anyone remains behind he will be buried alive and upside down

And a lamp will be lighted above his grave.'

Thus shouting, Maradlangha Ganda the Kotwar went from hamlet to hamlet.

When the old women heard the Raja's proclamation they said to one another,

'All is over. Our daughters and our daughters-in-law will be widows in their youth.

In this Raja's kingdom there is every happiness, but in this one matter he is a Chandal.

It was in this very manner that his father made the same proclamation and marched to Raiyya Sindhola,

And in our youth we all became widows. Hirakhan is the same as his father.

Let us run away from this kingdom. In another kingdom we will get some work or other

And those who are paired together will live happily.'

The Ganda went from lane to lane, from hamlet to hamlet, and at last reached the end,

Where Baiju sat drinking, where Bhikku tasted the liquor, where Ghorsu distributed it,

Where Tablu was always drinking with Mahangu Mahila. Telling them to make haste to see the Raja, the Ganda went to his house.

According to the order all the men got ready,

And at cock-crow on the Monday went to meet the Raja.

The Raja said to the groom, 'Go and bring the horse Giradwal Bachera,

On which my father and my grandfather used to ride.

He is tied in the dark house. Go and bridle him.'

The groom went, O brother, with the bridle to the dark house,

But when the horse heard him coming it beat *tap tap* on the ground with its hoofs and started neighing.

The groom with urgent fear ran back to the Raja,

'You may bury me upside down, Raja, but I daren't go near your horse.'

Son of his mother, glory of his father,

Great bull of the buffalo herd,

The Kshattri sprang from his chair and with the bridle in his hand

Went to the stable and opened the door. When Giradwal Bachera saw him

It started weeping *dhar dhar*. The Kshattri said, 'O Giradwal Bachera, why are you weeping? It is twelve years and thirteen ages since Kamal Hiro saw the country of her mother, So I am taking her there. Come quickly, get ready.'

But the horse Giradwal Bachera said, 'Listen my son, you were not taught by your parents; You are but a widow's child. Why do you in your folly desire to go to the land of your enemies? When I was young I came from Raiyya Sindhola empty-saddled. Now I am old, my son, what strength can I show? I will not go with you to Raiyya Sindhola.' When he heard this Raja Hirakhan was angry and he said, 'Never man abandons valour, a pig never leaves its fields, A woman never stops love-making, without cause life does not leave the body. If you refuse, my horse, I will strike you with my goad'.

At that the horse got ready and the Kshattri brought it to the house. It was bathed with seven pots of hot water and seven pots of cold. It was fed with pulse of washed gram cooked with ghee. After the horse had eaten and drunk, the Kshattri decorated it; Twelve mohurs he put round its neck, fourteen upon its forehead, The bells used by twelve bullocks, the decorations of fourteen bullocks he put on its back. The saddle was worth hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of rupees. When the Kshattri finished adorning the horse, he himself bathed In seven pots of hot water and seven pots of cold. He offered to his ancestors five handfuls of water and bowed his head to the Sun God; In the name of his ancestors he threw away five morsels, And five morsels this Gond Raja put in his own mouth. When he had finished eating and drinking, he came into the courtyard.

A broken pot was in his hand and he offered liquor to the four quarters of the earth.  
 He brought out the great pot carried by four and twenty men and gave liquor to his friends.  
 He brought out all his weapons and offered them liquor—  
 The great sword to kill wild buffaloes, the sword for wild elephants,  
 The sword to slaughter worthless men, the spear whose boss was big as a dali-basket,  
 Its blade large as a winnowing-fan, with seven points on its shaft,  
 Which was named Bairisal, the destroyer of enemies.

When the Kshattri had brought out his weapons and sprinkled liquor on them, he called on his helpers.  
 Chalan that makes the feet to walk, Kanhaiyya that protects the waist,  
 Chhatpel to guard the chest, Ranbel to guard the arms, Muh-changa to protect the face,  
 Jogani to preserve the lustre of the eyes, Khapardhari to protect the head.  
 While the Kshattri was getting ready, Kamal Hiro also prepared for the journey.  
 She wore the Jhakmak bangles, Raibajan anklets on her feet,  
 Sawatdigai armlets round her arms,  
 Bangles of gold and Mendhin necklaces. Pearls were woven in the parting of her hair,  
 Her hair which hung down over her forehead, while in between was a tikli of half a cowrie.  
 Her dhar were worth a hundred thousand mohurs, her nose-ring glowed like the quarter moon.  
 Her clothes were called Alkalori and their light lit half the sky.  
 Her sari's name was Chalam Chhira and had diamonds burning on all four sides.  
 Hiro the maiden looked like the very image of Narayan the Sun moulded by a goldsmith.  
 With a bundle of food and water in a pot Kamal Hiro was ready to start,  
 All the twelve villages came to bid them farewell.

Hirakhan was Raja of eight and twenty forts and Sardar of twenty-two,

Yet he went to his widow mother Damalghaila and folding  
 his ten fingers humbly addressed her :  
 'I go to the country of Kamal Hiro's mother.  
 If I live I will soon return to greet you once again.  
 If I die, there is already great sorrow in the world.'

Damalghaila kissed *surur surur* the Kshattri's cheek,  
 'Go son, kill twelve Rajas, conquer twelve kingdoms and  
 soon come back to me.'  
 As the Kshattri was leaving the town the young girls and  
 women said,  
 'The Raja is going to Raiyya Sindholā and who knows when  
 he will return?  
 Let us stop him at the boundary and sing Dadaria.'  
 So the women of the twelve hamlets ran and stopped the Raja  
 at the boundary,  
 And Paniya Dokari and the girl Bodrahin began to sing  
 Dadaria :

*Maradlangha Ganda is spreading his loom.  
 The Raja's going to Raiyya Sindholā, when will he  
 return?*

Then Mahangu Mahila, the Dewan, riding a hyena for a  
 horse, sang :

*I went to the bazaar for cucumbers.  
 The Raja's going to Raiyya Sindholā, he'll bring  
 you back parched rice.*

So laughing and joking, they sang Dadaria.  
 Then said the Kshattri, 'Return my mothers and my sisters,  
 If we live we will soon meet again, if we die our names will  
 be numbered.'

So saying he went on his way.  
 Thus the Lord of eight and twenty forts, the Sardar of two  
 and twenty walked, and as he walked he drank.  
 He crossed eight nullahs, he crossed twenty streams, at short  
 intervals there were clefts in the ground—  
 All these he crossed and as he went he left a fragrance in the  
 air.

The horse was walking slowly and Kamal Hiro says,  
 'May the ashes of this horse soon fly in the air.  
 We feed him every day on washed channa pulse and sweets  
 of ghee,

And how proudly the Kshattri talks about him. Yet he walks so slowly.

If he would go more quickly I would soon reach the country of my mother.'

When the horse heard this it said, 'O Kshattri, forget your love for me and hit me hard with your whip.'

Then the Kshattri beat it constantly and suddenly it leapt twelve kos through the air,

And since the army had gone on ahead, Kamal Hiro was left alone.

It was the month of Jeth. The hot dust below and the sun's heat above parched Kamal Hiro's throat.

There were blisters on her feet. She sewed sandals of parsa leaves but they broke immediately.

Whenever she saw a parsa tree she clung to it crying, 'O bhato, you have saved me.'

At this time, from Hardinagar came Jari, Khora, Kama, Soma, Dhera, Mangha, these six, to hunt in the forest.

When they saw Kamal Hiro they said, 'Whence comes this jungle queen?

She is fit for our Raja.' So saying they caught her and took her to Hardinagar.

The six said to the Raja. 'O Raja Maharaja, we have brought a jungle queen for you.

She is lovelier than any woman in your kingdom, more lovely even than your own queen.

Reward us with five villages apiece and we will marry her to you.'

'Bring her here and let me see what she is really like.'

When the Raja of Hardinagar saw the maiden Kamal Hiro, he was very pleased.

Raja of Hardinagar, Raja Ram Darwai, said to the six, 'If you can rouse this Rani's love for me, I'll give you not five but ten villages apiece.'

Then the six tried to persuade Hiro Rani. 'If you marry our Raja, we will give you a Shanker-swing in the top of the house.'

But she said, 'For twelve years I am unclean. I cannot marry yet.'

So the Raja sent her to live in the temple on the bank of the lake.

He sent the young girls of the village to look after her,  
And the maiden Kamal Hiro took water from a fisher-girl  
in the end of her cloth.

Now leave her story for a time and hear what happened to the Kshattri.

When remembrance of Kamal Hiro came to the Raja, he said to the horse,  
'O horse, Kamal Hiro is nowhere to be seen. These are the days of heat and thirst,  
Perhaps suddenly she has fallen fainting. Come horse, let us go back to find her.'  
So saying, he turned the horse about and went to where he had left Kamal Hiro,  
But there was no trace of her and the Kshattri frightened said to the horse,  
'Where has she gone? Has she been eaten by a lion of the jungle?  
Has she been carried away by some night-walking devil?  
O horse, if only you had not gone so fast!'

Searching, searching for her, the darkness came, and the Kshattri tied his horse to a tree and slept.  
At midnight awoke the spirit-helpers that were with him,  
The fourteen hundred Singhi Tumi, the sixteen hundred Chittawar,<sup>1</sup>  
The eighteen hundred Jugti Mohani. They took the road to Hardinagar, crying 'Raibhai' as they went.  
When they reached Hardinagar, in every house they searched for Kamal Hiro but there was no trace of her.  
Then they went to the temple by the side of the lake,  
Where she was receiving water from the fisher-girl in the corner of her sari,  
And the old women and the young lovely girls were trying to persuade her to marry their Raja,  
And she was saying, 'My head is unclean for twelve years and I can marry no one now.'

When the spirit-helpers saw her, the fourteen hundred Singhi Tumi,

<sup>1</sup> The Singhi Tumi and the Chittawar are often identified. They can take eighteen different shapes, from the tiger to the hornet. Jugti Mohani are living love-charms.

The sixteen hundred Chittawar, the eighteen hundred Jugti  
Mohani,  
They asked what had happened and returned to the  
Kshattri.

They returned to the Kshattri and woke him saying,  
'O brother Hirakhan, why are you sleeping? Kamal Hiro  
is in Hardinagar.'

Go quickly, lest she be married to Raja Ram Darwai.'  
The Kshattri sprang to his feet and told his horse all that  
had happened.

'Listen my son', so said the horse, 'disguise yourself as a  
Brahmin and go to Hardinagar.'

The Kshattri dressed himself as a Brahmin and went to find  
Kamal Hiro.

The Raja of Hardinagar, Ram Darwai, was sitting in his  
court and what was he saying?

'O brother Darbari, a jungle queen has come and I am  
going to marry her,  
So go and get a Pandit to consult the books and see what  
merit they will tell.'

As the chaprassis went to search for the Pandit, they met  
Hirakhan in his Brahmin attire.

Seeing him the chaprassis said, 'The luck of the great is  
great! Here is a Brahmin ready.'

Thinking thus they addressed the Brahmin:

'O Brahmin Maharaj come, you are summoned by the Raja  
Maharaja.'

With great respect the Raja made the Brahmin sit and told  
him all the story.

Then the Brahmin took out his book that was nine cubits  
long:

There was counted the grains of sand in the Under World,  
The number of the stars in the sky and the seeds in a  
pumpkin.

When he had read the book, the Brahmin told the Raja,  
'O Maharaja, whatever there is in this book I will tell, but  
don't be angry.'

The Raja said, 'There is no matter of anger here, but tell me.'  
'Do not marry this girl yourself, but marry her to some poor  
workman.'

Then keep her yourself, for otherwise you will be in great  
danger.'

The Raja was well pleased with what the Brahmin said.

'How wise I was to ask you, Maharaj! When should the marriage be?'

'Let it be tomorrow morning,' said the Brahmin.

The Raja gave five mohurs to the Brahmin and let him go away.

Thus Hirakhan returned to his camp and told all that had happened to Giradwal Bachera.

Then as a coolie he disguised himself. He put on a loin-cloth And an old man's cap and tied a rag about it. He took a load of wood and leaves and went back to Hardinagar. When he reached the town he cried, 'Come, buy my wood and leaves.'

When the Raja's chaprassis heard it they exclaimed, 'Truly the luck of the great is great!'

For yesterday we got a Brahmin quickly and today We find the coolie in the house itself.

Look there, O Raja Maharaja, a coolie is coming.'

The Raja says, 'Call him, call him,' and the chaprassis ran and brought him.

'O Raja Maharaja, your chaprassis have brought me here by force.

I am a poor man who lives by selling wood and leaves.'

'Listen, O coolie, they have not brought you to beat you. I am going to marry you to a queen.'

'O Raja Maharaja, I have a wife and sixteen children already. My wife winnows the chaff of sixteen villages,

And I go selling leaves and wood to sixteen villages.

Thus only am I able to fill my belly.

What advantage is there if I marry again?'

Then said the Raja. 'No, coolie, it is not like that. Listen, I will give you five mohurs.'

There is a jungle queen. Go with her seven times around the pole;

Then you may go away with the five mohurs, and I will keep the queen.'

Then the coolie was ready and the drums began to sound.

The young girls of the village started grinding haldi and the old women sang their songs.

They put haldi oil on Kamal Hiro and the coolie, and Hiro wept at her Kshattri's memory.

When the haldi oil had climbed upon them, Hiro and the coolie went round the pole.  
 When they had gone round seven times the coolie caught Hiro by the arm and danced.  
 Dancing, dancing, the watchers were filled with delight.  
 Then the Kshattri called to mind his Singhi Tumi, his Chittawar, his Jugti Mohani.  
 'Come, come, Chalan that speeds the feet, Kanhaiyya that guards the loins, Chhatpel that guards the chest,  
 Ranbel for the shoulders, Muhchanga for the face, Khapardhari for the head, come, come !'  
 So saying the Kshattri dancing, dancing, took Hiro from the house and led her to his camp.  
 Immediately he saddled his horse. He put Hiro on it and mounted it himself.  
 Taking the great spear that four and twenty men could scarcely lift, he rode with it to Hardinagar.  
 He cut off the head of Raja Ram Darwai and took Hardinagar into his control.

He turned his feet along the road to Raiyya Sindhola.  
 He turned to Kamal Hiro to lift her on his horse.  
 But the maiden said, 'No, I can mount it myself'.  
 Kamal Hiro had watched the grazier-boys with buffaloes;  
 How underneath its tail a boy tickled a buffalo  
 Crying 'Pulu lu lu lu' and the beast bent its knees  
 And let him climb by its leg up on to its back,  
 So Kamal Hiro tickled Giradwal Bachera, with her finger she tickled it underneath its tail,  
 Crying 'Pulu lu lu lu' but the horse did not bend its knees;  
 It kicked with both legs and sent the maiden flying.  
 The Kshattri laughed till his tears fell, then he picked up Kamal Hiro,  
 He put her on the horse and they rode away together.  
 After a while they saw a score of men approaching,  
 With bullocks dragging bamboos from Raja Tapsiriya's jungle.  
 'Get down, girl, and walk behind: they will laugh if they see you here'.  
 'I will not get down', the maiden said. 'What matter if they laugh ?'  
 The Kshattri was angry and pushed her off the horse.  
 Over its tail fell Kamal Hiro and walked behind her Raja.

The bullock-men joked with her: but when one called her bhauji,  
 And the Kshattri heard them laughing, he wheeled around  
     in anger,  
 And in terror they scattered, all the bamboos were broken.  
 Once again the Kshattri laughed and picked up Kamal Hiro  
 And they rode on together towards Raiyya Sindhola.

Then said Kamal Hiro, 'O my husband, you are not so beautiful as I.'

Hearing this, the Kshattri said in anger, 'Listen, O maiden. It is to fetch your sister Dhiro the maiden that I am going to Raiyya Sindhola.

For what other cause should I be going there?'

Hearing what the Kshattri said, Hiro's mind was filled with sorrow.

She said, 'O my husband, do not go my mother's land. It is an evil country and my father is very wicked.

Come, let us go back to Hiragarh.'

Then said the Kshattri, 'From here we can see Raiyya Sindhola. How can we return?'

So talking they came to Raiyya Sindhola and on the banks of the lake they pitched their tents,

And all the Kshattri's army pitched their tents and rested there.

In the morning the girls of Raiyya Sindhola came to the lake for water and maiden Dhiro with them.

At that time Kamal Hiro had gone out of their tent to wash her hands and face in the lake.

When Dhiro saw Kamal Hiro she recognized her face, And she said to her friends and companions,

'That girl who is washing her hands and face looks like my elder sister, Kamal Hiro.'

So speaking, the maiden Dhiro went to her home and told her mother Shriyal Jango,

'O mother, elder sister Kamal Hiro and her husband Hirakan have come,  
 And have pitched their tents on the banks of the lake.'

Then Shriyal Jango had the drums beaten through the town, 'For my daughter and son-in-law have come. O go to greet them!'

Then the women made ready, and taking kalsa and singing  
Dadaria,

They went to bring the Kshattri and Kamal Hiro to the  
house.

Before Shriyal Jango had the drums beaten, she declared,  
'That whoever tells the Kshattri about Bara Bathi Bengala,  
Him will I bury upside down and light a lamp upon his feet.'  
When Hirakhan entered the city of Raiyya Sindhola he saw  
none but women;

There was not even the name of a man to be heard and when  
the Kshattri asked the women of the city,  
For fear not one of them would answer him.

When Hirakhan discovered that none would speak with him,  
what did he do?

At midnight he made Kamal Hiro sleep and put a heavy log  
of wood beside her,

And he himself went from house to house listening behind  
the walls.

So doing he came to the end of the town and to the house  
of Paniya Dokara.<sup>1</sup>

There standing behind the wall he listened secretly.

That very day the old man had brought rice from Bara Bathi  
Bengala,

And was telling his wife what had happened there.

Hearing everything, the Kshattri went in and caught Paniya  
Dokara by the wrist.

Three times the old woman fell to the ground for fear, saying  
in her mind,

'Now all is over. Nothing can save us now. For Shriyal  
Jango told us to say no word to anyone.'

As the Kshattri and Paniya Dokari were talking, the old man  
recognized the visitor

And kissed him with his hand saying,

'It is good that you have come, my grandson. We have  
met after many days.'

The Kshattri waited to hear no more but said, 'Come, old  
man, and take me to Bara Bathi Bengala.'

The old man tried to stop him but the Kshattri took no notice.

<sup>1</sup> Paniya Dokara was originally an inhabitant of Raiyya Sindhola and in Raja Tapsiriya's service. But when Damalghaila (the Raja's sister and mother of Hirakhan) was married, the Raja sent Paniya Dokara and his wife to Hiragarh to attend on her. Paniya Dokara kept up his old house, however, and in later life divided his time between Hiragarh and Raiyya Sindhola.

What did the Kshattri say? 'If you do not take me, I will draw my sword and cut off your head.' For fear the old man got ready and went with the Kshattri to the bank of the lake. There the Kshattri prepared the horse Giradwal Bachera and roused Mahangu Mahila, And when they were ready he took the path to Bara Bathi Bengaia.

In eight nights and nine days they reached the place where Raja Tapsiriya had pitched his tents.

The Kshattri sitting on his horse saluted Raja Tapsiriya. 'Johar, uncle,' he said.

The Raja said, 'I will not accept your *Johar*.

First of all there must be the greeting of swords.'

At that the Kshattri put his shield across his chest.

The Raja raising his spear struck the Kshattri five times in the chest,

But the Kshattri made no sound and the spear's point was blunted.

Then said the Kshattri, 'Beware, my uncle,' but at that word

Raja Tapsiriya put a cloth round his neck and took grass in his mouth,

And standing with his ten fingers folded, begged forgiveness. 'Enough, my nephew, there is no Kshattri in the world like you.'

The Kshattri dismounted from his horse, and uncle and nephew greeted one another.

The Raja made the Kshattri sit with honour.

Then said the Kshattri, 'Uncle, tell me this: where is the golden boar? Come, show me.'

But what did the Raja say? 'Why go to see it, nephew? Even from seeing it men fall down.'

My own strength has gone by seeing the golden boar.

You are but a child of yesterday. Why should you go?'

So talking, the Raja tried to persuade Hirakhan.

But when night fell and they had feasted, the Kshattri let them all fall asleep.

At midnight taking Mahangu Mahila with him and bearing the great spear Bairisal,

He mounted his horse and went off to kill the golden boar.

When the Kshattri came near the golden boar, what did he see?

That in twelve kos of mud the golden boar was sleeping. Seeing it, Hirakhan shouted loudly but the boar did not awake.

Then he said to his Singhi Tumi, 'O Singhi Tumi! Turn into scorpions and go into the boar's ears and bite them.'

Then the Singhi Tumi turned into scorpions and going into the boar's ears, bit them, And the boar for anger awoke.

Then Hirakhan again shouted loudly, and how can I describe what happened?

The boar enraged, with one tusk to the sky and the other down to hell, Charged at the Kshattri.

In terror Mahangu Mahila ran away and hid in a jackal's hole.

There he fell asleep and as he slept Kukra Pat<sup>1</sup> gave him this dream:

'The golden boar will never die like this.

Bring two cart-loads of green wood and beat it with that. By such beating the boar will get tired and die.

If you beat it with spear the points will break.

A Kshattri should never fear.

The Kshattri's ancestors have cursed it and therefore it will die.'

At this Mahangu Mahila awoke and told his dream to Hirakhan.

The Kshattri's Singhi Tumi cut two loads of green wood and put them on a cart

And the Kshattri began to beat the golden boar.

When he had wearied it he struck it with the spear but the point broke and it rebounded in his hand.

The Kshattri struck the boar six times and six times the points were broken.

One point was left, and now the Kshattri remembered his ancestors and struck with the seventh point.

The spear split open the boar's lotus liver,

<sup>1</sup> Kukra Pat, the Cock God. Hirakhan's father, Dhartichiran, kept a black cock as a pet and took it with him everywhere. It used to tell him everything and after its death became a god.

And the golden boar at once fell to the ground and died.  
The Kshattri got off his horse and cut off the boar's teeth,  
eyes, tail and ears.  
He took them and went to sleep in his tent.

In the morning he got up and went to his uncle Tapsiriya  
Raja

And said to him, 'O uncle I have killed the golden boar.'  
Tapsiriya Raja thought that Hirakhan was lying.  
'O nephew, how could you kill the boar? You are but a  
child of yesterday'

To kill that boar great kings have come and died,  
But they could not kill it.  
I have lived twelve years and thirteen ages and I could not  
kill it.

O nephew, how were you able to kill the golden boar?'

Then the Kshattri brought out the boar's teeth, its eyes,  
its tail and ears and put them before the Raja.  
The Raja was very pleased and began to beat the drum of joy.  
The Raja said to the Kshattri, 'O nephew Hirakhan,  
You have killed the golden boar. Now destroy the kingdom  
of Bara Bathi Bengal.'

That boar was the gate-way to Bara Bathi Bengal.  
Until we destroy that country we will not return home.'

Then Hirakhan beat loudly on the drum,  
And when they heard the noise the armies prepared and in-  
vaded the country of Bara Bathi Bengal.

I cannot describe that country, how many women and men  
there were.

They were all magicians.

They turned Hirakhan's soldiers into clods of earth and  
stones.

When Hirakhan saw it, he said to Giradwal Bachera,  
'Listen, Giradwal Bachera, you are the horse of my ancestors.'  
Hirakhan mounted his horse and went into the midst of Bara  
Bathi Bengal.

What shall I say? I cannot tell the story,  
How the Kshattri cut off the heads of the Sardar, counting  
one by one.

When the women saw how Hirakhan was killing the Sardar,  
By their magic they turned the horse to stone and Hirakhan  
into a goat.

They kept him as a goat by day and made him sleep with  
them by night.

So that Hirakhan could sleep with them all, they took him in  
turn.

After many days had passed the Kshattri said to the women,  
'O women listen, do not make me a goat by day.  
For now I am full of love and lust for you, I will never go  
away.'

After that they let Hirakhan be a man both day and night.  
Flattering them, Hirakhan learned all their magic.

When he had learned it, Hirakhan got ready;  
He called on his Jugti Mohani and Singhi Tumi;  
He threw black and yellow rice and made his horse alive.  
Giradwal Bachera neighed like thunder.

Hirakhan mounted his horse and brought his army back to  
life, throwing black and yellow rice upon them.

He put his magic on Bara Bathi Bengala, turning the women  
and men there into statues.

I cannot tell the excitement as Hirakhan cut off the heads  
of the Mussulmans.

When he had cut off the heads of all the army of Bara Bathi  
Bengala,

He decapitated the Raja and took the land in his control.  
He appointed his own servants and sent them to collect the  
taxes.

Then came Hirakhan to Raja Tapsiriya and had the drum  
beaten for his returning home.

What shall I tell? I cannot tell the story.

Hirakhan sank in the blood. He could not let go his sword.  
For blood had stuck it to his hand.

When he left Bara Bathi Bengala, Hirakhan went ahead.

At that time the Sardar said to Raja Tapsiriya,

'You have fought against Bara Bathi Bengala for twelve years  
and thirteen ages.

But what have you done? Hirakhan has conquered the  
country.

'Your name will not remain but his will remain, unless you  
can have him killed.'

The Raja thought in his mind, 'My Sardar have spoken well.'

There were living Binjhwar Baiga, son and father;  
 The Raja said to them, 'O brothers,  
 Go and if you kill Hirakhan Kshattri, I will give you five  
 villages.'

Father and son, those Binjhwar Baiga went.  
 Hirakhan had tied his horse to a mango branch,  
 And was washing his hands in a stream.  
 The Binjhwar Baiga hid in a tree and aimed their bows  
 secretly.

The arrows hit Hirakhan. One stuck in his chest,  
 One pierced his forehead.  
 When they hit him he fell senseless.  
 Raja Tapsiriya said, 'Look, if you tell anyone I will bury  
 you upside down and light a lamp on the soles of your feet.'

After this Raja Tapsiriya returned and when he reached  
 the boundary of Raiyya Sindhola,  
 He had the drum of victory beaten.

Hearing the drum of victory, the women came to greet him  
 with kalsa on their heads,

Kamal Hiro the maiden put a golden pot as kalsa.  
 How can I tell the story of what happened when the women  
 went to greet him?

The women first performed Arati for the Raja and then each  
 did Arati for her own husband.

Hiro the maiden sought for Hirakhan Kshattri.  
 But she could find him nowhere and asked first one and then  
 another,

But no one could tell Hiro news of the Kshattri.

At last the maiden asked her own father where he was.  
 The maiden said, 'O father tell me, or my belly will break  
 and I will die.'

The Raja said, 'My daughter, the Kshattri is behind.  
 He killed a sambhar by the way and he is now cutting it  
 up.'

Watching, watching the road for the Kshattri, Hiro grew  
 weary watching for the Kshattri.

When night fell, what did Hiro do? She tied a cow-bell  
 round her neck and wandered through the town.  
 She stood behind every house and secretly listened,  
 For she knew somewhere she would hear news of her  
 Kshattri.

When she reached the last village she stood and listened  
behind Paniya Dokara's house.

Paniya Dokari asked her husband.

'What has happened, old man? The Kshattri went out with  
you but he has not returned.'

Then her old man said, 'Keep quiet, for if the Raja hears he  
will have you killed.'

What did the old woman say? 'At midnight who is coming  
here to listen?'

Then Paniya Dokara told his wife all that had happened to  
the Kshattri.

Hiro heard everything. She came in and caught Paniya  
Dokara by the hand.

When Kamal Hiro caught him by the hand, the old woman  
filled with fear threw up her hands and fell.

She said in her mind, 'All is over. For it was for this very  
maiden that there was a proclamation

That no one should tell Hirakhan that all the men of Raiyya  
Sindhola had gone to kill the golden boar,

And if any one should tell him that for twelve years past none  
had been able to kill the boar,

He should be buried upside down and a lamp lit upon 'his  
feet.'

Today this very girl has come to us. Nothing can save us.  
We will be killed.'

But Kamal Hiro said, 'Tell me where my Kshattri is, and  
you will be saved.'

Then Paniya Dokara, half in fear and half in courage, told  
her.

'Listen, my grand-daughter, your Hirakhan went there and  
killed the golden boar.

That boar was wallowing in twelve kos of mud; one tusk  
went to the sky, one tusk went down to hell.

It had destroyed the kingdom of Bara Bathi Bengala.

But listen, grand-daughter, Hirakhan has conquered Bara  
Bathi Bengala:

He has taken its people into his control,  
And he is collecting the taxes every year.

When Hirakhan had conquered the land, he went to his  
father-in-law Raja Tapsiriya,

The Raja had the drums of victory sounded and moved his camp.

After Hirakhan had fought for eight days and nine nights, my grand-daughter,

His sword was stuck to his hand with blood, And for weariness he rode his horse slowly, slowly, and so lagged behind.

As they were on their way, many a Sardar spoke to Raja Tapsiriya,

It is Hirakhan who killed the golden boar and conquered Bara Bathi Bengala.

Now it is his name that will remain, not yours. It would be good to kill him.

Then the Raja told the Binjhwar Baiga and his son

To wait by the eighth river and the twentieth stream, And there to kill the Kshattri when he came.

When the Kshattri came there, he tied his horse to a mango branch and went to wash in the stream.

Then, my grand-daughter, the Binjhwar Baiga shot him, And the Raja declared that, Whoever tells my daughter I will bury him upside down,

And for fear of this, my grand-daughter, nobody has told you. Your Hirakhan is at the eighth river and the twentieth stream.

His life has not yet departed and his horse, tied to a mango branch, is by him.'

Hearing this whole story, Kamal Hiro thought in her mind and pondered in her heart,

And what did she say? 'May my mother's country be destroyed by fire, for my Kshattri is surely dead.'

I took no notice of the warnings of Bodrahin, Limtarihin Dokari, and of my husband's mother and his sister.

Now see what fruit I have gained.'

As the maiden wept, the earth began to break *char char*, for earth herself could not bear the grief of Kamal Hiro.

Kamal Hiro sped towards her Kshattri swift as a dog in flight, Or as a monkey leaps from branch to branch, as a deer springs through the forest, or as a tiger charges.

The maiden's throat was parched by the hot ground below and the burning sun above,

Yet all night she travelled and she ran by day.

When Kamal Hiro reached the eighth river and the twentieth stream, what did she see?

Her Kshattri was seated on a stone and leaned back against a mound.

When the Kshattri saw Kamal Hiro, what did he say? 'O my Hiro, my life is in great pain. Pull the arrow from my body.'

Kamal Hiro pulled out the arrow from his forehead.

But when she pulled the arrow from his chest, it brought out his lotus liver with it.

When the arrows came out of the Kshattri's body, his life left his body also.

Kamal Hiro rolled on the ground and beat her head and breast,

Weeping weeping, she yet encouraged her heart. She collected sandal wood.

But when she put the Kshattri's body on the pyre and began to light the fire,

Rai Gidhnin flew down and threw the body to the ground.

Kamal Hiro said in her mind, 'May the ashes of this vulture soon fly in the air!

It was to eat my Kshattri's body that she threw it to the ground.'

Again Hiro put the body on the pyre and again the vulture threw it down,

And thus it happened three times and Rai Gidhnin threw the body down.

Then Kamal Hiro full of anger went to the horse Giradwal Bachera.

There was a gourd tied to the mango branch and the maiden broke it with a stick.

In that gourd the Kshattri had put his Singhi Tumi and had shut them in with a stopper.

When the gourd was broken the Singhi Tumi, crying 'Raibhai Raibhai', came out;

They sought for Hirakhan and found his corpse.

The Singhi Tumi ran and half-way along the road they saw the God of Death,

And took the Kshattri's soul out of his hands.

They sprinkled magic water with a branch of bel wood, And Hirakhan Kshattri sat up alive.

Kamal Hiro fell on the Kshattri's neck and wept.  
 The Kshattri mounted Giradwal Bachera and took Kamal Hiro with him.  
 Then Kamal Hiro said, 'May my mother's country be destroyed by fire !  
 O my husband, make no distinction between black and mottled, but cut off all their heads,  
 Marry the maiden Dhiro and let us go away.'  
 Hirakhan Kshattri reached the boundary of Raiyya Sindhola and again pitched his tents;  
 He wrote a letter and sent it to Raja Tapsiriya.  
 'Aré, Raja Tapsiriya, you beheaded 'my great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father.  
 I am their son and I will avenge them. So quickly make ready your army.'

Reading the letter Raja Tapsiriya's anger mounted from his heels up to his forehead,  
 And in anger he ground his thirty-two teeth *khat khat* together.  
 He said in his mind, 'O Hirakhan, I killed your ancestors.  
 And you are but a child of yesterday. You were not taught by your parents; you are but a widow's child.'  
 Reading the word *Aré*, Raja Tapsiriya drew his sword in rage.  
 When Raja Tapsiriya in anger gave the order, the earthen drums sounded *dum dum*;  
 The drums of bronze resounded *tan tan*;  
 The music of the copper drums was heard twelve kos away.  
 Within an hour the army of the Raja was prepared.

Then said the horse Giradwal Bachera, 'Come, my son, and mount on my back,  
 And take Kamal Hiro with you, my son. Show no love or pity, but strike me mercilessly.'  
 Hirakhan Kshattri took all his weapons,  
 The sword that killed wild buffaloes,  
 That killed wild elephants and slaughtered useless men,  
 And the great spear Bairisal, destroyer of enemies.  
 He sprinkled liquor on his weapons in the name of his ancestors and called to mind his Singhi Tumi.  
 'Come, come, as in the days of my ancestors, my Singhi Tumi. Today we will cut off the heads of our enemies.'

When Hirakhan and the maiden Hiro mounted the horse,  
the Kshattri struck it mercilessly,  
And the horse leapt into the sky; its feet did not touch the  
earth.  
The horse went into the midst of the army of Raja Tapsiriya.

The Kshattri made no distinction of black or mottled.  
Counting one by one, he cut off the heads of his enemies.  
For two hours and a half he made a great pile of heads.  
The bodies stood up like a hill and the blood flowed like  
a river.

When Raja Tapsiriya saw that all his soldiers had lost their  
heads,  
He said, 'I now too will lose my head and nothing can  
save me.'  
He put his cloth around his neck and took grass in his mouth;  
He fell at the feet of Hirakhan Kshattri and said, 'O my  
nephew, forget this and forgive me.  
Now the kingdom will be in your hands  
I will give you the maiden Dhiro in marriage; only spare  
my life.'  
To so much the Kshattri listened and they prepared for the  
marriage.  
Now let this story be and listen to what happened to Mahangu  
Mahila.

Paniya Dokari from childhood had been the friend of Mahangu  
Mahila the Dewan,  
And Mahila the Dewan, playing on a broken drum, danced  
the Karma with Paniya Dokari.  
Of the battle between the Kshattri and Raja Tapsiriya he  
had heard nothing.  
As he was dancing Karma, Mahila the Dewan said to Paniya  
Dokari,  
'O woman, you have become old now and there is no more  
pleasure in you.  
Make virgin bread for me, for I will not eat married bread.'  
But Paniya Dokari said, 'O Mahangu Mahila, what do you  
mean by virgin bread and married bread?'  
Then Mahangu Mahila said, 'It is virgin bread I want.'  
So Paniya Dokari cooked him bread with oil and brought  
it to him,

And Mahila the Dewan—what did he say? 'This is not virgin bread, you sixteen-husbanded.'

This is married bread. What I call virgin bread is the bread wrapped in leaves and dry cooked upon the fire.'<sup>1</sup>

Then Paniya Dokari wrapped the bread in leaves and dried it on the fire and gave it to Mahila the Dewan.

Mahila the Dewan said, 'You old woman, this at last is virgin bread.'

And he ate the virgin bread with great enjoyment.

When Mahila the Dewan had eaten the bread and gone to sleep, at that time Paniya Dokara arrived home.

When he saw Paniya Dokara, Mahila made his nose sound loudly.

Then said Paniya Dokara, 'Are you sleeping, my samdhi? There has been a tremendous battle between the Raja and the Kshattri.

There is a great pile of heads; the bodies stand like a hill; The blood flows like a river and you are sleeping, samdhi.' Hearing this, Mahila said, 'I was sleeping, samdhi, I knew nothing of it.

Nothing can save our Kshattri.' So saying Mahila ran away, thinking that he too would lose his head.

Filled with fear, Mahila ran and ran and at last hid in a jackal's hole.

When Mahila hid in the jackal's hole, it was the month of Jeth-Baisakh and the hole was filled with leaves.

There Mahila the Dewan fell asleep and dreamt a dream: 'That when Hirakhan was going round the pole with the maiden Dhiro, at that very time Raja Tapsiriya cut off his head.

Therefore, O Kshattri, do not go round with Dhiro, but let her take your sword instead.

If Dhiro goes round the pole with the sword, then when it is finished,

And Raja Tapsiriya attacks the Kshattri,

Then the Kshattri will take Hiro and Dhiro on his horse. He will cut off the Raja's head and will go away to Hiragarh.'

<sup>1</sup> Wrapped in leaves, the steam of the cooking bread cannot escape and it becomes 'firm and strong as a virgin's body'. Married bread is made with oil and has holes in it. Its steam escapes and it is not so strong.

When he saw this dream Mahila the Dewan got up at once and ran towards Hirakhan Kshattri, And said to him, 'O Kshattri, today I have seen a ghost without a head.

Your ancestor, a headless ghost, came and gave me a dream.' And so he told Hirakhan of his dream. Hearing the story Hirakhan believed him. When the preparations for the marriage were finished, what did the Kshattri say? 'Take my sword and put haldi oil upon it; Let Dhiro take it round the pole, but I will wait outside.'

Hirakhan Kshattri sent his sword and they put it with Dhiro the maiden; They anointed it with haldi oil and took it round the pole. As the girls of Raiyya Sindhola anointed Dhiro and the sword with the oil, They sang songs of abuse upon the Kshattri, And said, 'O Dhiro, your husband is a sword.' But the Kshattri was not ashamed at what they said. As Dhiro went with the sword round the pole, Raja Tap-siriya brought his army to kill Hirakhan. But Hirakhan and Hiro were sitting on the horse and they cut off whatever heads remained, And cutting off the Raja's head they brought Dhiro from the marriage-booth and set her on the horse. Hirakhan took the people of Raiyya Sindhola under his administration; He collected the annual taxes and set out for Hiragarh.

Mahila the Dewan sat on a hyena for a horse and went galloping ahead. In eight nights and nine days they reached Hiragarh and pitched their tents in the small mango-grove. The young and lovely girls of Hiragarh prepared to escort the Kshattri to his house. Damalghaila wept and made a song of her weeping. For joy she carefully cow-dunged her courtyard, and prepared for the Kshattri a dish full of pearls. When the girls came to escort the Kshattri to the town, There came with them Limtarihin Dokari, Paniya Dokari, Baragathnin Dokari and Bodrahin whose navel stump was like a spear.

They came singing Dadaria to bring him to the town,  
And they cried, 'Our Raja's ancestors were destroyed in  
Sindhola, but this child of yesterday has come in  
victory.'

Some of the women cried, 'Now after twelve years and  
thirteen ages we have got our husbands once again,  
Today all night we will not let them go.'

Who can tell of the rejoicings? The earthen drums sounded  
*dum dum*, the bronze drums resounded *tan tan*,  
The music of the copper drums was heard twelve kos away.  
As they brought Hirakhan into the town they did Arati before  
his horse Giradwal Bachera.

So they brought Hirakhan with Hiro and Dhiro to the  
palace.

Damalghaila for joy was throwing diamonds and pearls to  
the crowd,  
And Damalghaila and Limtarihin Dokari and Paniya Dokari  
and Baragathnin Dokari danced with Bodrahin.

On that day tobacco dust flew in the breeze and the gutters  
ran with liquor,

Hirakhan Kshattri sat on his throne in Hiragarh and ruled  
the land,  
Son of his mother, glory of his father,  
Great bull of the buffalo herd,  
Lord of eight and twenty forts, Sardar of two and twenty,  
Hirakhan Kshattri the Raja.



## **APPENDIX**



## GLOSSARY

AJAWAIN—A medicinal spice.

ARSI—The common oilseed with blue flowers.

BASI—Food (usually rice) left over from a previous meal and served again.

BETEL NUT—A common way of referring to the areca nut which, smeared with lime, is wrapped round with the leaf of the *Piper betle*, Linn. and chewed.

BHAJI—Any kind of vegetable.

BHANWAR—The ceremonial procession of bride and bridegroom round the sacred pole at a wedding.

BHATO—Elder sister's husband. The word is misspelt *bato* on pp. 62 f.

BHAUJI, OR BHAWAJ—An elder brother's wife. See song 410.

BHILWAN—The marking-nut tree, *Semecarpus anacardium*, L.F.

BRINJAL—The common vegetable.

CHAMPA—The pretty flower of the *Michelia champaca*, Linn.

CHANNA—The gram, *cicer arietinum*.

CHAPRASSI—A messenger or guard, generally in uniform.

CHAROTA—A spinach, *Cassia occidentalis* or *obtusifolia*.

CHILA-ROTI—Specially prepared fried cakes of rice or wheat flour.

CHURELIN—The usually dangerous ghost of a woman who has died in pregnancy or childbirth.

DARSHAN—The auspicious vision of a god or great man.

DEUKHI—The grain-husking machine worked by the feet.

DEWAR—A husband's younger brother.

DEWARANI—The dewar's wife.

DHAR—Large silver shields, with chains attached, worn over the ears.

DHIMAR—A caste of fishermen, of good social standing.

DHOBI—A caste of washermen, usually regarded as untouchable.

DHOTI—A man's loin-cloth.

DIDI—Elder sister.

DOSI—The Master of Ceremonies at a wedding.

DUBI GRASS—The sacred grass, *Cynodon dactylon*, Pres.

DUMAR—The wild fig tree, *Ficus glomerata*, Roxb.

GALI—Abuse.

GANDA—A low semi-aboriginal caste of weavers.

GHAT—(a) The pass over a hill; (b) Any approach to a tank or river used for fetching water or washing clothes.

GHEE—Clarified butter.

GHURSI—The village warming-pan, an earthen bowl which is filled with smouldering scraps of cow-dung carefully damped down.

GULEL—A pellet bow.

GUMI-BHAJI—A vegetable.

GUNDRI—A roll of cloth or twisted straw placed on the head below a water-pot to keep it steady.

GURU—A religious preceptor.

HALDI—Turmeric, much used in weddings.

HALWA—A sweet, made of flour, dried fruit and ghee.

HAKA—A beat for game. Magicians use the word in their charms to drive away evil spirits.

HARRA—*Terminalia chebula*, Retz.

JAMUN—*Eugenia jambolana*, Lamk.

JETHANI—Wife of a husband's elder brother.

JOGI—A Hindu ascetic, one who practises Yoga. See note on p. 46.

JORI—Yoke-fellow. See note on song 430.

KACHUR—A kind of wild spice.

KADAM—The tree, *Anthocephalus cadamba*, Miq.

KAJAL—Lamp-black, often used to underline the beauty of a girl's eyes.

KALINDAR—A variety of pumpkin.

KALSA—A ceremonial and decorated pitcher, often with a lamp placed over its mouth.

KARELA—A bitter but popular vegetable.

KARONDA—Misspelt *karanda* in song 181. A shrub, *Carissa carandas*, Linn., with small white sweet-smelling flowers.

KAWAR—A carrying-pole with a net of cords at either end.

KHICHRI—A mixture of rice and pulse cooked together.

KHIR—A sort of pudding of rice, milk and sugar.

KODAI—The husked and cleaned grain of the kodon millet.

KODON—The popular and revered small millet, *paspalum scrobiculatum*.

KOEL—The Indian cuckoo. See note on p. 148.

KOS—A measure of distance, two to three miles. See note on p. 46.

KOTWAR—A village watchman.

KUNDRU—*Coccinia indica*.

KURO—A measure equal to 5 *seer*.

LADDU—A ball of sweetmeat composed of cream, gram and sugar.

LAKH—100,000.

LAMSENA—A youth who serves for his wife instead of paying the bride-price.

MAHUA—The tree *Bassia latifolia*, Roxb., which provides the aborigines with food, oil and ardent spirits.

MAINA—The Indian starling. See note on p. 37.

MASUR—The pulse, *ervum lens*.

MOHUR—A gold coin formerly current.

MOKAIYA—A small grain.

MUKKADAM—A village headman.

MUNG—The pulse, *phaseolus mungo*.

NANAND—Husband's younger sister.

NISHTAR—A small tax levied on forest produce taken for personal use.

PAN—Literally, leaf. Usually applied to the entire delicacy of areca nut, lime and the leaf of the *Pipar betle*, Linn., wrapped up together.

PANCH—A council of village or tribal elders.

PANDIT—A learned man, generally a Brahmin.

PARSA—*Ficus retusa*, Linn.

PATWARI—A revenue official.

PHUNDARA—A coloured cord with balls of red, blue and green wool, used for tying the hair. See p. 104.

PEJ—A thin gruel, the staple food of the aborigines.

PIHU—A bird. See note on p. 84.

PIPAL—The sacred fig, *Ficus religiosa*, Linn.

RAHAR—The pulse, *cajanus indicus*.

RAJA—Properly a king or ruler, used in poetry for husband or lover.

RAKSHASIN—An ogress.

RANI—Properly a queen, used in poetry for a wife or mistress.

RASA—Literally, juice, flavour, honey. In the songs often used as almost equivalent to lust or passion. Hence *rassia*, a coxcomb, a young man full of *rasa*.

RAWAT—A cow-herd, the same as Ahir.

SAJA—The tree sacred to the Gond, *Terminalia tomentosa*, W. & A.

SAMBHAR—The deer, *cervus unicolor* or *equinus*.

SAMDHI OR SAMDHIN—The relation between two parents-in-law. The father of my son's wife is my samdhi.

SARAI—The tree, *Shorea robusta*, Gaertn.

SARI—A woman's cloth.

SASURAL—A father-in-law's house.

SEER—About two pounds: in Mandla it is equal to 80 *tola*.

SEMUR—The cotton tree, *Bombax malabaricum*, D. C.

SIKKA—The cords at either end of a *kawar* in which loads are placed.

SUA—Parrot.

SUASIN—Attendant on bride or groom at a wedding. See p. 180.

SUPARI—Areca nut.

TELI—The Hindu caste of oil-men.

TIKA—Mark placed on the forehead, usually with rice and haldi, at a time of ceremonial greeting.

TAIL—Oilseed, *Sesamum indicum*.

TULSI—The sacred basil plant.

URID—The pulse, *phaseolus radiatus*.

ZOOLUM—Any kind of oppression or force: Gond, like civilized, women are said to enjoy the love-zoolum of their admirers.



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